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**DANCING FOR STRENGTH  
AND BEAUTY**



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**DANCING FOR STRENGTH  
AND BEAUTY**

(RENASCENT DANCING)

*A CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL TREATISE*

BY

**EDWARD SCOTT**

*Author of*

"Dancing in all Ages," "Dancing, Artistic and Social," etc.



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## PREFACE

THE term "renascent" is used for the kind of dancing advocated in this treatise, because it implies the idea of coming again into being. It suggests the revival of a spirit that has animated the practice of dancing during those historic periods when its marvellous potentiality for developing strength and beauty has been most fully recognized. It also suggests the rebirth of a style that is healthy and virile, as opposed to certain degenerate movements which obtained too firm a hold on the public fancy in the years immediately preceding the great war, and the formless dances to rhythmless music that followed.

Among the Jews dancing was an expression of religious fervour, of joy in victory, or of domestic pleasure. (Let them praise His name in the dance." "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance." "They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance." "And there was music and dancing.") But in ancient Greece dancing was even more than this. From the time when Lycurgus enjoined the Spartan parents to have their children taught the art from their earliest years, throughout the long period of their nation's glory to the century before its downfall, dancing among the Greeks was not only a symbol of divine

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worship and an expression of joy, but was regarded as a most important branch of education.

It was also thus regarded by the early Romans while, under the Republic, their mode of life was simple and austere. Not until the more decadent days of the Empire did the evils of professionalism begin to manifest themselves. Then it was that private individuals of "social consideration" ceased to join in the dances. They became too indolent, and preferred to sit and watch the activity of hired performers.

As regards our own country, it was doubtless during the period succeeding the Renaissance, especially in the reign of Elizabeth, that the educational value of dancing was most justly esteemed. The dances of Tudor days were for the greater part vigorous, manly dances, and in a special section of this work I endeavour to show how they were *really* danced.

It has been necessary to correct many absurd misconceptions concerning dancing in bygone ages ; such as have in recent years been promulgated by writers and exponents who, instead of applying directly to original and contemporary sources of information available to the student who will take the trouble to find and consult them, appear to have adopted the easier but less conscientious method of evolving so-called "ancient dances" entirely from their own imagination. Unfortunately, inaccurate descriptions and unreliable comments of unqualified writers, and the efforts of dancers unschooled in the genuine traditions of their art, have been copied and imitated by other writers and dancers still less qualified, until the



public ideas of ancient dancing are in many respects altogether at variance with the actual facts. Especially is this the case as regards the notion that our ancestors constantly exchanged bows and curtseys during their dances—a notion absolutely without foundation as I here endeavour to prove.

Above all, it has been my earnest wish to rescue the manly, chivalrous *menuet de la cour* from the silly stage conventions that have during the past half-century distorted the superlative beauty of the actual dance out of all recognition. An attempt has been made in these pages to explain the symbolism of the minuet, and show exactly how it was danced in its purest traditional form.

To the waltz I have devoted considerable space, because, when properly taught and rationally practised, it is a dance admirably adapted to promote the main purpose in view. Moreover, since the passing of the minuet, it is almost the only social dance that has made any direct appeal to the æsthetic perceptions. For the sake of those who in view of recent events are inclined to be prejudiced, it is shown how the waltz, in its original form, came first from Italy and thence travelled northward through Provence.

Certain common fallacies with regard to classic or Greek dancing have been pointed out, and I have ventured a few critical observations on the work of modern exponents of this particular branch of art. Attention has also been given to the national dances of our own and other European countries. It is good to perform such dances from the point of view here adopted; but it is

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from the daily practice of exercises that belong to the genuine art of dancing, such as are described in Chapter VII, and technique, as in Chapter IX, that the best individual results are obtainable.

To many people the idea that the practice of good dancing may have a salutary effect on the body, that it may enlarge the scope of muscular activity, strengthen the limbs and beautify the form, will all appear quite feasible. They may even be disposed to concede the possible rejuvenating influence of dancing. But that the constant practice of movements of a certain order on the lines herein suggested will exercise a *beautifying influence on the face and features* is a proposition less likely to obtain ready assent. To the incredulous, however, I can only offer the explanation briefly given in my first chapter, and enlarged upon throughout the book. Obviously if I had not good grounds for believing and, indeed, knowing it to be true, there would be no object in advancing such a proposition. I have no beauty specific to offer for sale, but am merely suggesting a rational means whereby those who have failed to draw a prize in the lottery of looks may greatly improve their appearance, and those who have been more fortunate in this respect may enhance whatever natural gifts they possess.

EDWARD SCOTT.

ROCHESTER HOUSE,  
HOLLAND ROAD, HOVE.



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# Dancing for Strength and Beauty

(RENASCENT DANCING)

## CHAPTER I

### EXPLAINS THE TITLE AND PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

THERE are people to whom mention of the word "dancing" immediately suggests thoughts of a pleasant though somewhat frivolous form of pastime, one in which they can, if so disposed, themselves take part; or they may consider dancing as a light accomplishment cultivated by professional experts for the entertainment of on-lookers. The idea of dancing as a serious form of art is one that may commend itself to the cultured; but the idea of dancing as a form of exercise to be diligently practised by young and old for the great physical and, indeed, moral benefits which it may confer, is one less likely to enter the average person's brain; therefore the title and aim of this treatise call for a few words of explanation at the outset.

Among my readers there will, of course, be some who are aware that what is now regarded mainly as a diversion was once a most important occupation of the greatest and wisest men—that

the art which we have relegated to the ball-room and the stage was in former times practised as a form of worship in the temples and performed around the blazing altars of the gods.

But although the ancient dignity of dancing is to the learned a matter of common knowledge, although many still admire it as an art and delight in it as a form of recreation, there are beneficial qualities of dancing the importance of which, though fully recognized in classic times, are almost totally ignored by us.

The Greeks, we know, were practically nature worshippers. Their religion consisted of a deification of the various powers of nature. With them physical perfection was a matter of the gravest consequence. Beauty was unanimously proclaimed by mortals and immortal gods to be "the most excellent of all things." They perceived that personal comeliness was marred by clumsy action, while beauty of form and feature was enhanced by elegance of pose and movement. And they knew that the dance, *χορός*, offered the best possible means of promoting these desirable qualities. So dancing was held by them in high esteem, not only because it was regarded as an invention and pastime of their gods, but also on account of the *great physical benefits which its constant practice conferred upon their race.*

Doubtless much of the modern apathy as regards the educational and physical advantages of dancing may be attributed to the fact that there is no art concerning which there is, at the present day, so little real enlightenment and so much popular misconception.



The great majority of people are still disposed to regard dancing as a mere matter of "steps," a form of exercise in which the feet and legs of the performer are chiefly brought into action. But this notion holds good only of certain ball-room dances as they are imparted by indifferent teachers, and to those "sand" or "patter" dances of the variety stage, in which the performers allow their arms to hang perpendicularly while exerting their lower extremities more and more vigorously until they at length secure the coveted applause—applause which is accorded all the more readily, since the long-suffering spectators are aware that the dancers are not likely to leave off until they get it.

Now this, needless to say, is not the kind of dancing I had in view when planning the present work. The dances most beneficial from either an æsthetic or hygienic standpoint are clearly those in which *every part of the body is brought more or less actively into play*. The movements may be vigorous, as in the strathspey, or they may combine agility with smoothness and sinuosity as in the genuine minuet in which the body, neck, head, arms, fingers and features, as well as the lower extremities, must all act in perfect rhythmic unison.

In speaking of the minuet, which in its true form is the dance *par excellence* best adapted for the promotion of grace and beauty, I am constrained to use a qualifying adjective, because it must always be kept in mind that the *genuine* dance of our ancestors bears little if any resemblance to the so-called "minuets" we have for



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many years past been accustomed to see represented on the stage and elsewhere. These for the most part have been mere "fancy dances" with much hand raising and a lot of senseless bowing and curtseying, such as was never really done either in the minuet or any other ancient dance.

The geometrical construction of the *menuet de la cour*, its unique steps and figure, its wonderful intrinsic beauty, and the great physical advantages to be derived from its practice, provided it is properly taught, are matters to which I shall devote attention in a separate chapter. Meanwhile I would urge that, with rare exceptions, it is not so much from learning so-called "new dances" (which generally turn out to be old ones revived under a new name) that physical benefit is derivable as from the *constant daily practice of those beautiful movements and exercises that belong to the genuine art of dancing*, many of which I shall endeavour to illustrate and explain.

How far the hitherto very perfunctory methods of instruction adopted by ordinary dance teachers,<sup>1</sup> especially as regards school classes, may have contributed to the prevailing misconception of the true aim and attributes of dancing I will not here pause to consider; but that such misconception exists is abundantly evident. It is exemplified in the fact that parents frequently send their children to a dancing class just to "pick up," as they express it, "a little dancing for the Christmas parties." Yet they will send them elsewhere

<sup>1</sup> The distinction between a "dance teacher" and a teacher of dancing is explained elsewhere.



I. MINUET. *TOUR DE MAIN.*





to practice exercises and movements to which some new-fangled name has been given, but which are in reality merely dancing in pseudo-scientific disguise. People may call the kind of exercises to which I am alluding by any sonorous title they please; but the fact remains that *whatever is best* in them has been known to and practised by genuine exponents of the art of dancing from time immemorial. I have, indeed, little doubt that their promoters would themselves be the first to admit this, and if pressed would claim credit for *arrangement* rather than *invention*. Parents, however, are so prone to regard *dancing* as an amusement for Christmas parties, they know so little of its glorious traditions, its immense scope and potentiality for good, that they can only be attracted by the lure of novelty, and are often ready to give credit for originality where none is due.

Broadly speaking, exercises belong either to the domain of dancing or of gymnastics. The former is generally regarded as an art, the latter as a science. But the artistic element is not wanting in some forms of gymnastics, and there is much that is essentially scientific in dancing. The nature of the movements may tend to assimilate, or they may diverge until they are diametrically opposed. Anyhow, gymnastics and dancing exercises should be kept, so far as is possible, quite distinct. The aim and scope of each branch is entirely different, as I shall in another section endeavour to show. People should not go to the gymnasium for dancing, nor to the dancing class for gymnastics. Those teachers, however,

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who consider dancing to rank among the higher arts, and who *teach it as such*, are not likely to introduce gymnastics in their classes.

The frequent practice of *genuine* dancing and of those harmonious arm and body movements that properly belong to the art will certainly promote strength of limb and normal muscular development; but even more especially is it adapted to improve the pupil's figure, and impart those most desirable qualities, gracefulness and beauty.

But here I can imagine the non-professional reader exclaiming: "Yes, I can readily believe that the practice of good dancing develops the muscles, for I have seen evidence of considerable strength in male dancers on the stage. I can also understand how the practice of accordant movements may improve the figure and impart symmetry of form, and how in this sense dancing may justly be regarded as an aid to beauty. BUT DOES IT TEND TO IMPROVE THE LOOKS? Can the practice of dancing possibly help to make a person better looking in the generally accepted sense of the term?"

And to this I reply most emphatically: YES, DANCING OF A SUPERIOR ORDER, RENASCENT DANCING, COMBINING THE ELEGANCE OF THE ANCIENT GREEK<sup>1</sup> WITH THE VIRILITY OF SIXTEENTH TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IDEALS<sup>2</sup>—that is the kind

<sup>1</sup> Henry Bulwer says: "Is it not possible that the constant study which the Greeks made of the beautiful gave them beauty?" —*Hayward's Essays*, Dalling and Bulwer.

<sup>2</sup> "Dancing gives above all things manliness" (John Locke, 1632-1714). "Elle est utile au corps" (Voltaire, 1694-1772). For the *real* dances of the period see Chapters XI and XII.



here advocated—DOES ACTUALLY TEND TO IMPROVE THE LOOKS OF THOSE WHO PRACTISE IT.

And this is not mere assertion. It is a statement of *positive fact*, based upon close personal observation, long experience in teaching and the corroborative experience of many with whom I have been professionally associated.

And the reason why dancing, *when properly taught and rationally practised*, does help to make the pupil better looking is not, perhaps, far to seek. But we must be careful to ascertain *what kind of dancing and what kind of exercises* are best adapted to bring about this result, for it is certain that some movements, especially if practised injudiciously and to excess, have *quite the opposite tendency*.

For instance, the practise of exercises and movements which involve severe strain tend to *harden the features*, since undue tension of the muscles naturally finds expression in the face. We all know how a person's features are contorted by bodily pain, and they are in a lesser degree also contorted by severe muscular tension, no matter in what part of the body it may be localized.

Clearly, exercises which involve physical effort should be employed with the greatest caution. Such exercises, if too frequently practised, or too long continued, will prove *detrimental to the looks as well as to the health*. For this reason and for others to which I shall elsewhere draw attention, gymnastics of the more violent kind are quite unsuited for girls, and the excessive practice of tiptoe dancing by young children is also strongly to be deprecated.



On the other hand, gentle undulating rhythmic movements, beautiful poses, such as give æsthetic pleasure to the pupil, and dances that produce exhilaration, like the genuine waltz, are in every sense beneficial. Such exercises tend unmistakably to *soften the features and brighten the facial expression of the dancer.*

The knowledge that good dancing improves the figure, confers strength and activity, and also adds beauty to the countenance should be sufficient, one would imagine, to induce anybody to acquire the art—and its acquirement for recreative purposes is not a difficult matter under the guidance of a skilled teacher. But there is yet another inducement, and this perhaps the strongest of all.

BY THE FREQUENT PRACTICE OF GOOD DANCING OF THE RENASCENT ORDER AND WELL-REGULATED EXERCISES IT IS POSSIBLE TO RETAIN IN LATER YEARS MANY OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF YOUTH. The cheek may lose its smoothness and the hair its colour, *but vigour and agility will continue through middle and even advanced life.*

This fact was also known to the ancients. He whom the Delphic Oracle proclaimed to be the wisest of men, the immortal Socrates, took lessons in dancing of Aspasia when he was getting on in years, and the reason given to his companions was that he derived benefit from the exercise. Herein was evinced the wisdom for which he was renowned, and it would be well if many middle-aged people to-day were to follow this illustrious example. They would find it more beneficial to their figures than the consumption of any amount of flesh-reducing nostrums.

Many famous dancers have retained their activity to a very advanced age. Bathyllus, who flourished in the days of Augustus, was said to have been still admired in the reign of Nero. Pliny speaks of a mimic actress, Luceia, who danced when a hundred years old,<sup>1</sup> and also mentions Galeria Copiola, who on a certain occasion returned to dance on the stage just ninety-one years after her first appearance. Our own Virgin Queen, than whom no finer dancer ever adorned a throne, was discovered practising the gaillarde, a dance with brilliant steps and *caprioles*, in her sixty-ninth year, and I have myself known people well over seventy who could easily beat many of the present generation at waltzing, and indeed at dancing generally.

The main points to which I have drawn passing attention in this chapter will be enlarged upon as we proceed.

<sup>1</sup> *Natural History*, Book VII, chap. i.



## CHAPTER II

### WHAT DANCING IS

It is hardly to be expected in a practical treatise that any attempt should be made to present a systematic historical account of dancing in past ages, or to trace its origin to that nebulous period which so many orators and authors have delighted to call "the mists of antiquity."

Briefly, however, we may surmise that æons ago, ages before the dawn of civilization, before the faculty of speech had been acquired—perhaps even during the process of evolution from his simious ancestry (assuming such to have been his origin)—primeval man had learnt to express emotions of love, joy, sorrow, fear or anger, his wishes, intentions and aspirations by means of gestures, signs, and movements that were as significant to his fellow creatures of those far-off times as words are to us.

Such was doubtless the beginning of dancing, that is, at least, the *act* of dancing. But the kind of dancing which results from excess of vitality cannot be claimed as belonging exclusively to man. It is shared by many animals. A dog will dance with delight at the approach of his master, and dogs may be trained to dance; a horse will dance spontaneously to the sound of music, and



horses also may be taught to dance ; so may bears and other animals.

But animals express anger as well as joy by dancing. To give an illustration. Not many years since I was driving from Loch Katrine to Callander by coach. After leaving the Trossachs, we found the way blocked by a herd of cattle that had strayed from the meadows into the road. The driver slackened pace, and most of the cattle climbed up a grassy bank out of the horses' way. But there was one bull, a fine fellow of ferocious aspect, who seemed very reluctant to move. When at length he did condescend to stir himself, he walked slowly up the bank in a most dignified manner ; but directly he reached the level ground he turned to face us and positively danced with rage. His four feet were all off the ground together, and he executed a regular Highland fling. But his dancing unmistakably expressed indignation at being disturbed, and I don't think anyone on the coach would have cared to descend and approach him while he was in that frame of mind.

The *act* of dancing is coeval with nature itself, since all nature may be said to dance ; and I incline to think that the *art* of dancing, though, of course, a very different thing, is also a matter of evolution and development rather than of individual invention.

It is true that the ancients, who associated dancing with all that they held most sacred, attributed its invention to one of their gods or immortal heroes. In the Ajax of Sophocles the great god Pan is spoken of as a dancing master.

Phœbus is addressed by Pindar as "the Prince of Dancers," and even the mighty Zeus has, according to Athenæus, been represented as "moving gracefully amid the dancing throng." Amongst the many hypothetical inventors of the art it may be sufficient to mention the goddess Rhea or Cybele, Thoth, the Egyptian Mercury, the Dioscuri, and the muse Erato, who, by the way, was also associated with love and marriage.

Seeing that dancing was so well patronized by the greater gods of Olympus, we can easily understand the veneration in which the art was held by the ancients; but all the same, they knew no more about its real origin than we do.

As a matter of fact all simple steps used in dancing are based upon the natural movements by which we make progress over the ground, such, for instance, as running, walking, jumping, sliding, etc. And it is the employment of these natural movements, *not consecutively*—mark that!—but in regulated sequences, at recurring intervals, and in rhythmic measure, that constitutes what is known as dancing in its simplest form.

But in civilized nations, wherever dancing has been cultivated as an art, these natural movements of the limbs have been performed subject to definite rules and restrictions which have held good from time immemorial—to our certain knowledge ever since the days when Amenophis II ruled in Thebes, and that is between three and four thousand years ago. I mention this particular monarch because I remember to have seen sculptures of his reign which show conclusively that rules which the dancer was then required



to obey were the same as those which are, or, at least, should be obeyed by us.

So, then, we may define dancing, in an artistic sense, as a rhythmic motion or progression of the body by varied and studied actions of the limbs, combined with movements and attitudes arranged for the avowed purpose of displaying agility and personal gracefulness.

But in its very highest form dancing is the art of expressing gracefully, by movement and gesture, every emotion and sentiment of which the mind is capable, and every incident possible to human life.

The above definition, which I also gave in my work *Dancing in All Ages*, applies mainly to dramatic dancing, that is to the *ballet d'action* which should, as Noverre expresses it, "speak, as it were, through the eyes to the very soul of the spectator." Such was the wonderful dancing of the great Roman mimes who were able, as Gibbon tells us in his *Decline and Fall*, to represent without use of words the various fables of the gods and heroes of antiquity. It was the dancing of the ancient Greeks which Walter Pater, in his essay on Lacedæmon, compares with "that perfect poetry, or sculpture, or painting in which the finger of the master is in every part of his work."

It must, I fear, be admitted that the more serious kind of ballet, the *grand ballet d'action*, is seldom exhibited on the modern stage. People seem to prefer something light, and entertainments of dancing usually assume the form of *divertissements*. A great deal has been said and written in favour of the so-called Russian Ballet, and it may



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with justice be admitted that the dancing of many individual Russian exponents is of a very high order, while the general training of the *corps de ballet* is excellent. But all the same, it cannot be denied that the ballets exhibited by them in this country—at least as regards construction and invention—have not been of the highest order. Some have even shown signs of decadence, and most have fallen short of the ideals expressed by the great masters and critics of the art of dramatic dancing.

Moreover, it should be remembered that, apart, of course, from their national dances, such as the gopak, mazurka, etc., the style of dancing exhibited by these accomplished performers is mainly based upon the teaching of the Italian school, the Italians having, by general consent, been regarded as the greatest exponents of dramatic dancing since the days when Pylades and Bathyllus delighted the populace of ancient Rome.

No one who has travelled in Italy, especially in the vicinity of Naples, can have failed to remark the extraordinary facility which the people evince in communicating their ideas to one another by means of gesture. I have myself frequently noticed how in railway carriages, when the noise of the train is such as to prevent the employment of speech, they will continue a conversation, as it were, with arms, fingers and features, making their meaning apparently quite as intelligible as if they were still employing their tongues. It is said that there was once a tyrant of the Southern provinces who, having occasion to fear rebellion on the part of his subjects, forbade them, on penalty of

death, to speak to one another for a long period ; so they learnt to communicate their ideas by signs and gestures. If this story be true, it follows that the marvellous pantomimic ability of the Italians is the natural outcome of an ancient and cruel restriction.

As regards social dancing, a very beautiful, but unhappily somewhat unusual, aspect of the pastime is presented by Laurence Sterne.<sup>1</sup> This, as I have never seen it quoted elsewhere, I will give very briefly.

The author is resting for the night at a farmhouse near Lyons, where are assembled the old grey-headed farmer, his wife, and large family, consisting of six sons, with their wives, also his daughters, with their husbands, and many grandchildren.

After a simple but generous supper, the old man, who years ago had been something of a musician, took his violin and went outside on a little esplanade before the house. There his wife joined him, the author being seated between the old couple on a sofa by the doorway. Then all the family party, children and grandchildren, having washed, done their hair, and generally smartened themselves up, came out and began dancing to the old man's music. The author proceeds to say :

“ It was not till the middle of the second dance when, from some pauses in the movement wherein they all seemed to look up, I fancied I could distinguish an elevation of spirit different from that which is the cause or the effect of simple jollity. In a word, I thought I beheld Religion mixing in

<sup>1</sup> *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy.*

the dance ; but, as I had never seen her so engaged, I should have looked upon it now as one of the illusions of an imagination which is eternally misleading me, had not the old man, as soon as the dance was ended, said that this was their constant way ; and that all his life long he had made it a rule, after supper was over, to call out his family to dance and rejoice, believing, he said, that a cheerful and contented mind was the best sort of thanks to Heaven that an illiterate peasant could pay."

To which the author replied :

" Or a learned prelate either."



### CHAPTER III

## ART AND THE PUBLIC

THAT comparatively few people are able to discriminate between greatness and mediocrity in matters of art is an indisputable fact. Intuition and natural taste incline many to prefer what is fairly good to what is egregiously bad ; but the number of those who can intelligently appreciate the beautiful and sublime in any particular art is necessarily limited. The great majority of people neither form nor express opinions of their own.

They praise and they admire they know not what,  
And know not whom, but as one leads the other.

And of all the arts, dancing, the most ancient and once the most important, is now the art about which the public is least informed.

That this is so may easily be shown. Take painting, for example. People go to the Royal Academy and other art galleries to gaze or glance at the works exhibited. Some go because they really like pictures, and some because they believe it is the correct thing to do. And these usually finish up with a headache through trying to get through too much at one time. There is no occasion, they think, to spend two shillings if they can make one do. As a nation we are not

disposed to spend too lavishly on art. We spend far more on personal comfort. There is evidence of this in ordinary English homes—the homes of well-to-do people. You will find in them nice soft carpets to tread upon, nice hangings and luxurious upholstery, very comfortable chairs and sofas. But look on the walls! What do you find there? Certainly not much to gratify the æsthetic faculties.

Generally speaking, it is only people who are themselves able to paint who can really understand the technique of painting, but all educated persons know what is meant by perspective, and would understand the distinction between its areal and linear forms. All would be familiar with such terms as middle distance and chiaroscuro; in fact, they would be able more or less intelligently to describe any given picture, even though they might in some cases pretend admiration which they did not honestly feel.

With regard to poetry, which in ancient days was inseparably connected with dancing,<sup>1</sup> it might, I think, be said that popular poets are often best known by their worst productions, while poets that appeal more directly to the cultured few are almost invariably most widely known by their best. There is a reason for this. To cite only two instances. Lord Tennyson is undoubtedly a great poet, one who has written verse that is probably destined to be immortal. But he is also a *popular* poet. He is read by the *many*, and in consequence, the “May Queen” and

<sup>1</sup> We still speak of the number of *feet* in a verse, which is reminiscent of the time when poems were danced as well as sung.



“Charge of the Light Brigade” are among the most widely known of his poems. And are they not among his very worst? The former is at best a maudlin production, and the latter can only be made to rhyme by adopting a slovenly and vulgar manner of pronouncing the word “hundred.” But take Shelley, “the poet of poets,” who is not read by the multitude. Are not the “Skylark” and “Ode to the West Wind” the most familiar of his shorter pieces, and are they not also among his very best? People admire these lovely poems partly, it is true, because they have been selected for them to admire, and their beauties pointed out by those who know. The average reader understands little of the technique of prosody—*poeta nascitur non fit*—but most people have some idea of rhyme and metre, though they may not always know when the rhyme is true or whether the verses move in trochaic or iambic measure.

Music is, perhaps, the art which in some form or other is most generally cultivated. It is a fact that not a few people pretend to admire Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, when in reality their tastes incline towards quite a different form of music. There are those who will bore themselves by listening to fugal intricacies and contrapuntal combinations which they are quite unable to appreciate, when, if the truth were known, they would rather be enjoying light operatic selections, and some would even prefer ragtime! But there are humbugs in every art and every sphere of life. The majority of people who attend classical concerts do understand and appreciate



what is good in music, and even at an ordinary ballad or instrumental concert I venture to think that almost anyone present would know if the music were being played *staccato* or *legato*, and if it were in a minor or major mode. And is there anyone who does not know the difference between a crotchet and a quaver?

But as regards dancing, the art which inspired the choicest works of Phideas, Apelles and Praxiteles;<sup>1</sup> the inseparable accompaniment of Pindar's Odes; "the prolific source whence music has ever drawn"; admired by Plato, and discussed by the gravest philosophers of old; the art which even in our own country was once regarded as an important and necessary accomplishment the practice of which would "make scholars better fitted for their books." What percentage of people, even including dancers outside the profession, could nowadays explain the difference between a *coupé* and a *jeté*, between a *bourrée* and a *temps échappé*?

Yet these are among the simplest of steps. They are to dancing merely what the crotchet and minim are to music. It may be objected that the terms are foreign. Well, are not most of the terms employed in music also foreign? Yet who could not explain the difference between *allegro* and *adagio*?

But to confine ourselves to English and non-technical language: How many people could explain why some movements and postures appear graceful while others appear quite the opposite? How many among those whose intuitive per-

<sup>1</sup> Vide Athenæus, *Deipnosophists*.

ceptions of the beautiful enable them to detect when the various parts of the body are inharmoniously disposed could discover and point out *what was actually wrong*? Moreover, how many could suggest the true artistic manner in which the various parts should be co-ordinated?

Now this is just what the genuine study of dancing enables one to do, and it will be my pleasing task in the present work to initiate the reader into some of those secrets of harmonious pose and movement that have enabled dancers—and not dancers only, but sculptors and painters also, to delight their fellow creatures in all countries and all ages.

The matter of the preceding paragraphs may savour rather of a digression from our subject, but my object has been to show in a few words that however little knowledge of the arts generally the average person may possess, he knows more about other arts than he does about dancing.

But while some exponents of this particular art are conscientiously striving to enlighten the public, to improve the tone of dancing and dignify its practice, there are, unfortunately, others who seek only to attract attention by exploiting whatever they conceive to be novel, no matter how extravagant or decadent its real nature. If any measure of success appears to attend their performance, other dancers of inferior talent will soon outdo the originators in extravagance and absurdity, and the public, following their lead, admire and applaud. So it is that pernicious innovations spread. But, as Mr. Rudyard Kipling observes, “public success or failure has not neces-



sarily any bearing on the real value of a production, for if it had, the public would be as gods knowing good and evil."

I cannot help thinking, however, that the managers of variety halls and other places of amusement might occasionally, and with advantage to their enterprises, try to *lead* instead of merely *follow* what appears to be the public taste, especially when the craze of the hour happens to be specially foolish or decadent. The ovine proclivities alluded to by Milton in the couplet quoted at the beginning of this chapter are doubtless accountable for the extraordinary success which has sometimes attended the exploitation of silly, inelegant, and even indecorous dances both on the stage and in the ball-room. But the public are not quite so foolish as managers seem to suppose, and when dancing that is really good is brought before their notice, they seldom fail to appreciate its merits, especially when they are sufficiently impressed with the idea that it is something they ought to admire.

We are not, as already hinted, here concerned with such dances and movements as are the outcome of mere craving for novelty; nor is the kind of dancing that evolved from certain degenerate negroid importations to be in any way commended, nor the style that does, or perhaps I should rather say did, obtain at some of the West-End night clubs.

By this I do not mean to imply that the dancing exhibited at these clubs—at least such as I witnessed—bore any striking resemblance to the kind of dancing which, according to Burchard, was indulged in by certain of the guests at the Vatican



festivities instituted by Cesare Borgia on the occasion of his sister's betrothal to Alfonso d'Este ; or the kind that drove Cato from the Floralia. On the contrary, by comparison, the dancing at the least austere of these modern assemblies was quite reputable. But to my way of thinking it is a style that seems to lack the pure spirit of healthy enjoyment. Whatever of pleasure there may be in such dancing does not depend entirely on the exhilaration produced by rapid, easy motion, nor on the æsthetic perception of harmonious movement. There is unquestionably a *tertium quid*.

I have seen, as I dare say most of my readers have also seen, two methods of holding a partner in social dancing, neither of which has much to recommend it. There is the feeble style in which a man puts his arm under the girl's arm, holding his hand out about six inches beyond her back, while she, for support, is constrained to take him by the shoulders or elsewhere. Then there is the opposite and very primitive style, in which the man seizes the girl in an unceremonious marriage-by-capture kind of way, hugs her in a close embrace, and, while dancing, glares around him at other members of the company like a hungry dog with a bone.

It is claimed for dancing that it is a means of self-expression. If this be true as regards the two types of dancers just described—and I have seen both types at the same assemblage of dancers—then I should certainly advise a girl to have very little to do with either of them, because the style of the first mentioned, which is also *generally*

*accompanied by bent knees*, is indicative of weakness in every sense, while the style of the latter is strongly suggestive of viciousness.

It is not, however, with degenerate performances that we are here concerned. We have to consider dancing in its threefold aspects of a fine art, a healthy exercise, and an innocent diversion. The styles that have been mentioned incidentally by way of deprecation belong to none of these. Artistically, it is not the decadent but the re-nascent that claims our attention; hygienically, in accordance with our title, what is most conducive to strength and beauty; and socially, the style here advocated is the manly and chivalrous, as contrasted with the modest and maidenly.

In the ball-room a man should support his partner and control her movements by the strength of his right arm, otherwise without any bodily contact or undue pressure.

## CHAPTER IV

### FASHION AND MOVEMENT

LET us in the present chapter very briefly consider how the movements of human beings in civilized countries are influenced by the nature of their ordinary attire.

To begin with, I will cite two extreme instances.

The famous Grecian Helen, whose beauty was "the cause of a long ten years' war," officiated in early life as a priestess in the temple of Artemis, and we are told that she danced publicly therein.<sup>1</sup>

All ancient dancing was characterized by its simplicity, the movements being for the most part unpremeditated and natural. Such was the dancing of Miriam and of the maidens of Shiloh who "came out to dance in the dances," the leader extemporizing, while the rest imitated her actions as closely as they could.

The dancing of Helen, while in the temple of a goddess, would have belonged to the more serious order called by the Greeks *emmeleía*; but whether she danced thus or joined in the more lively *dipodia*, it is certain that in her simple

<sup>1</sup> The Spartan girls under the code of Lycurgus were taught no accomplishments except music and dancing.



chiton—which consisted of a piece of material sewn together and open at each end, just fastened at the shoulders by brooches, and girt under the breasts—her movements must have been absolutely unrestricted by her attire.

I say absolutely unrestricted, because the chiton, which was made the full length of the body, was always girded up before dancing, as in the famous statue of Diana we see it girded up for running. Otherwise the clinging folds of drapery would have interfered with the free action of the limbs.

Very different must have been the movements and dancing of Mary Stuart, with a large ruffle round her neck, her body encased in a tight unbendable corset, and the action of her lower limbs entirely concealed from view by an enormous farthingale.

In Helen of Sparta the movements of the body, neck, and limbs must have been perfectly natural and unrestrained, whilst in Mary Queen of Scots they were necessarily conventional and restricted. Yet she also was a good dancer—almost as good as her cousin Elizabeth—and each lady was accounted graceful by her contemporaries.

These instances are selected as being illustrative of the effect of costume on personal gracefulness, and it would, perhaps, be impossible to find any more diametrically opposite. There can be no question, from a rational or artistic point of view, as to whose movements are likely to have been the more truly graceful. It is an accepted axiom that in graceful action the several parts of the body must not be allowed to en-

cumber one another. Neither, then, should the clothes be allowed to encumber the body. To assert that stiff corsets and tight bodices do not in a measure encumber its natural movements is simply to talk nonsense.

Of course the chiton was not the only garment worn by the Greek women. There is no reason to go into details. Suffice it to say that whatever else there may have been, it was nothing that in any way interfered with their freedom of movement. Charles Kingsley tells us that the first mention of stays he ever found was in a letter of Synesius, Bishop of Cyrene, who relates how, when he was shipwrecked on a remote part of the coast of Africa, the Greek ladies of that neighbourhood were shocked at the appearance of an Eastern slave-girl with a pinched waist.

The ancient Greeks had no idea in covering the body but to hide it; whereas with us the idea is, generally speaking, to cut the material so as to hide the flesh, yet at the same time display—well, not the figure, but a something that the modiste has decided shall do duty for a figure. There is a considerable difference between making the clothes to fit the body, and squeezing, padding, and distorting the body to make it fit the clothes.

A garment that hangs loosely about the body is essentially graceful in itself, because it falls in natural and ever-varying folds that adapt themselves to every change of position assumed by the wearer.

Sometimes, for a little while, a really graceful



style of costume obtains ; but there is no stability. The decrees of Fashion are continually changing, and women are naturally more subject to her caprices than are men. Moreover, they generally profess to discover beauty in the prevailing style, whatever it may be. One season we are informed that "waists will be worn low," and the next season we learn that they "will be worn high." Then comes a time when there is no perceptible waist at all. Occasionally there are projections of garments designed to enlarge or extend the figure abnormally in some particular direction, but mostly *a tergo*, like the characteristic development of the Hottentots. So long as such bustles, "improvers," or whatever they may be called, happen to be in vogue, the ladies declare they use these contrivances because otherwise they would "look all down alike," as if this were something to be specially avoided. And then behold ! the fiat goes forth that this is precisely the appearance to cultivate. Immediately all protuberances disappear as if by magic, and the lines of the figure become as nearly as possible parallel, back and front alike.

Another turn of Fashion's kaleidoscope, and every curve and undulation of the female form divine becomes apparent through clinging draperies of diaphanous texture. Sometimes frocks are worn so tight that a normal gait becomes impossible, and skirts must needs be "slashed" to allow of movement, and again they are made ample and with yards of material to spare.

These constantly changing and widely divergent methods of clothing the body must exercise a



considerable effect on the movements of women. The wearer of a hoop or loose garment and the wearer of a tight or "hobble" skirt can neither walk, run, nor dance in the same manner; and no sooner does a sensible fashion obtain than it gives place to another more or less recrudescent.

Of course no sensible person would dream of advising a woman to dress in direct opposition to the prevailing style. To make oneself conspicuous in any way is a thing to be avoided; but individual good taste can often greatly modify what it may be deemed unadvisable to change completely. Generally it is only the extremes of bad fashion that look so supremely ridiculous.

When, however, any article becomes fashionable, the wearing of which is positively injurious to health and destructive to gracefulness, the sooner it is discarded the better, and I am pleased to find that sensible women are themselves giving up and refusing to allow their daughters to wear those preposterous high-heeled boots and shoes that have done more mischief to the physique of the female portion of the rising generation than is generally supposed.

The natural position of the body when standing erect is at right angles to the soles of the feet, the centre of gravity falls directly within the base, and perfect balance is maintained without conscious effort. It follows, then, that if the heels be artificially raised, and the body still retains its correct relative position with regard to the soles of the feet, it will be thrown forward,

and can only be prevented from falling by muscular contractions which under natural conditions are not required. It will be evident also that the higher the heels are the more acute will be the angle of inclination which the body tends to make with the ground in front and, clearly, the greater will be the muscular effort required to compel it to assume a vertical position. This muscular effort must, consciously or unconsciously, be maintained all the time the shoes are worn and the wearer is on her feet.

Surely it is sufficiently obvious that this continuous muscular strain must be not only injurious and fatiguing, but also destructive to harmony of motion.

The *natural* action of walking is accomplished as follows :

Understand first, however, that the bones of the lower limbs are articulated at the hips by ball and socket joints, in the same manner as are those of the arms at the shoulders, and if allowed to oscillate freely they will swing forward and backward with a pendulum-like action. If we also bear in mind the fact that gravity produces a tendency in a limb to fall downward, we shall soon learn how it is that the action of walking becomes more or less automatic and can be performed with comparatively little muscular effort.

In beginning to walk we raise one leg, at the same time inclining the body slightly forward as it rests on the other foot, the effect of which action being that a great part of the step is taken mechanically owing to the tendency of



the raised limb to swing forward and regain its vertical position. Meanwhile the whole weight of the body remains on the stationary limb, passing from the heel to the toes. Now the heel of the foot which has been swung forward and which, from the momentum acquired, has naturally passed a little beyond the vertical position, touches the ground, and simultaneously the weight is thrown on to it, the body being again advanced as the other foot leaves the ground.

So, then, the body is carried continually forward, the weight passing alternately from one leg to the other, and from the heel to the toe—the heel being always the part that first reaches and first leaves the ground. For this reason, viz. that it may be capable of bearing the shock incident on striking the ground, the heel has been provided by nature with a harder substance than the rest of the foot. It would also be well to remember that when the weight passes from the sole of the foot to the toes, these, in their natural state—that is when they have not been crushed and distorted by the wearing of tight, pointed shoes—spread themselves out to seize the ground, as it were, and lever the body forward.

And now let any girl with three-inch tapering French heels on her boots try the experiment of walking as above described—the only natural way. Not when the ground is wet, nor when there are many people about, only someone to pick her up; for she will assuredly find that she is unable to comply with the very first requirement of natural locomotion, and must



either plant her foot down so that heel and toe touch the ground together, or run the risk of frequently falling.

To facilitate the obvious necessity of placing both toe and heel on the ground simultaneously, and perhaps with a view to improving their appearance, the heels of such boots are generally carried very much forward under the instep. The effect of this arrangement is that the weight of the body falls just on that part of the foot where nature intended that it should *not* fall, and, in consequence, the slight concussion which attends each step, instead of being broken by the elastic spring of the arch naturally formed by the sole of the foot is felt directly on the most tender part and transmitted along the vertebral column to the brain.

The wearer of high-heeled shoes is thrown into the position of one who walks on tiptoe, the body resting, as it were, on an inclined plane, and the fatigue of walking is increased in proportion as the heel is raised. Part of the power that should be used to propel the body is needlessly expended in supporting it, and unless considerable muscular effort be brought to bear—an effort that cannot be long sustained—the abnormal raising of the heels has a tendency to cause the knees in walking to bend forward.

This tendency is of course also apparent, and for similar reasons in the untrained or imperfectly trained dancer who attempts to move on tiptoe. In either case considerable strain or tension of the extensor muscles is involved in order to preserve a straight limb. The bending of the knees

is not so noticeable in females as it would be if their limbs were not concealed by their frocks ; but the peculiar gait which the action produces is always more or less distinguishable.

There are women who will tell you that they can walk more comfortably in those abnormally high-heeled shoes to which I have been drawing attention. This may be true in certain cases, but it only means that they have, by long custom, learned to accommodate their steps and movements to this kind of footgear—in fact, having acquired the habit of walking *incorrectly*, they cannot easily return to the natural movement. Surely a stronger argument *against* the wearing of such shoes could not easily be adduced.

But unquestionably the most deplorable of all silly fashions are those which from time to time during the past thousand years or more have induced women to practice waist compression. This has been done, I suppose, in consequence of the prevalent idea among civilized nations that slimness of form is a mark of beauty. I say among civilized nations because we know that savages often associate mere bulk with beauty, and fatten their girls with abundance of milk before submitting them in the marriage market.

We may, I think, readily admit that slimness of figure is beautiful *when all parts of the body are shaped in proportion* ; but in people inclined to *embonpoint*, any undue compression of the waist only makes the rotundity more apparent elsewhere.

*How much better for them to practice good dancing*



*and exercises specially adapted for the purpose of reducing the flesh and promoting general flexibility of the body!*

There is nothing really beautiful in an abnormally small waist. It is generally acknowledged that a thing can only be beautiful which it is agreeable to contemplate, and when we see a waist unnaturally small the mind is not only offended by the want of proportion exhibited in the outward form, but is apt involuntarily to occupy itself with ideas of the inevitable displacement of the viscera within—a subject which, it will be conceded, it is not agreeable to contemplate.

One day, many years since, I rested for awhile in that chamber of the Louvre where stood the Venus of Milos, and was greatly amused at the audible criticisms passed upon the statue by people who came in, especially the women. Many of the less educated were quite unaware that the statue was anything out of the ordinary, and some frankly expressed uncomplimentary opinions. This, indeed, is not to be wondered at, because it is only the educated and artistic eye that can perceive and appreciate whatever intrinsic beauty there may be in a mutilated piece of sculpture. But the more cultured of the visitors were aware that the statue was accounted a gem of antique art—they knew that the magic touch of some forgotten sculptor's chisel had rendered a block of marble more precious than gold; and, knowing this, they feigned to admire what they evidently considered unworthy of imitation. There was one fashionably



dressed lady who went into positive raptures over the statue's contour, and she, strange to say, was the one whose own manufactured contour was the most diametrically opposite. Her waist had been squeezed in till it was not much more than half so big as that of the marble goddess, and was as round as if it had been struck in with a pair of compasses, instead of being, as it ought to be, elliptical. In consequence her bust appeared abnormally prominent, while her "improver"—which happened to be the article then in vogue—was enormous. Now if this lady had expressed her *real* sentiments, she would have said: "Yes, that kind of figure may appeal to artists, sculptors, anatomists, and such people. It may do well enough for *Venus*, but it won't do for *me*! My dressmaker knows far more about what is beautiful than the man who carved that!"

Little has here been said about the prejudicial effect of abuses of fashion upon the health, because so much has already been written upon that subject. I have rather endeavoured to show that stays, *when stiff and tight*, and heels, *when ridiculously high*, are not only intrinsically ugly, but that they tend to destroy natural gracefulness on the part of the wearer. We shall see, if we observe the gait of a woman or girl thus equipped, that in place of the lithe, elastic movements so noticeable where there is unrestrained freedom of body and limb, we have presented for our admiration a kind of dignified waddle—dignified in a sense because of the inborn grace of woman, which even these atrocious inventions cannot altogether

disguise, and because of the strong efforts she makes to retain composure and equilibrium.

"And are there not," it may be asked, "plenty of ridiculous and ungraceful things about men's attire?" Yes, certainly there are; but if I were to consider them I should be going beyond the scope of this chapter, since their clothing is not greatly affected by the vagaries of fashion—men, I suppose, being more conservative by nature—and the things they wear are not such as would materially interfere with their freedom of movement. In men ungraceful actions are, generally speaking, the result of natural awkwardness and want of proper training; whereas in women ungracefulness is frequently attributable to the wearing of garments or articles destructive to the natural co-ordination of movement in body and limb.

The passing attention here given to the influence of Fashion on personal gracefulness is by no means supererogatory, since it behoves the dancer who would derive *strength and beauty* from the practice of her art to ponder seriously thereon.

Remember, however, that I have in all cases qualified the names of articles mentioned by such adjectives as tight, stiff, high, and so on, because it is these qualities only that render them objectionable. Surely sleeves that will not allow the arms to be raised, skirts that do not admit free movement of the legs, and collars that restrict the natural action of the neck, are all things to be deprecated. A rational, pliable corset that does not pinch the wearer but is used simply for the

same purpose as was the *taenia* of the Greek ladies may not be without advantages ; but corsets to support and corsets that constrict are different articles. Also a moderate heel, which is not too narrow, may be neither harmful nor inelegant ; but to wear shoes that distort the feet and produce an entirely artificial gait is a practice that cannot be too strongly condemned.



## CHAPTER V

### THE PRINCIPLES OF GRACEFULNESS

BEFORE proceeding to consider the elements of the beautiful in relation to the art of dancing, I will make a few general observations on that very desirable quality known as gracefulness.

Many years since, Sir John Lubbock related at a Mansion House banquet how the Bishop of London, having asked some schoolchildren to express their ideas about grace, one instanced a "lady," another a "cat" and a third suggested "a fern." These, of course, were not the kind of answers the good bishop expected. The "grace" he meant was of an entirely different kind. But at least the examples given indicated the children's conception of things that are graceful.

It would doubtless be difficult for anyone to give offhand a concise and correct definition either of grace in the spiritual sense, or of gracefulness as a quality in the abstract. With regard to the latter—the only kind with which we are here concerned—it is, like beauty, a matter in which much depends on personal taste. "What, then, is taste?" you may feel inclined to ask. Well, the late Grant Allen in his *Physiological Æsthetics* "provisionally" defines it as "the subjective concomitant of the normal amount of activity

not directly connected with the life-preserving function in the peripheral end organs of the cerebro-spinal nervous system."

No doubt the above quoted definition will commend itself to the scientific reader, but to persons of ordinary intelligence it may appear a little involved. Eugene Veron says of taste, in much simpler language, "What is it but the capacity to feel æsthetic pleasure?" Or we may, I think, describe it as that faculty of the mind which enables us to perceive and appreciate the sublime and beautiful. As regards gracefulness, attention will here be mainly directed to the quality as exhibited in ease and elegance of posture and movement, the co-adaptation of the several parts of our bodies and fitness or propriety of action.

"Fitness," says Emerson in his essay on "Art," "is so inseparable an accompaniment of beauty that it has often been taken for it." Certainly it is a most important attribute to consider as regards a true conception of personal gracefulness, since in a world dominated by capricious Fashion much that is considered graceful at one time may at another appear quite the contrary; indeed, actions are only really graceful when they are strictly appropriate to the conditions and circumstances by which they are impelled.

For instance, a movement or posture (which, as already pointed out, is the result of a previous movement) can only be regarded as ungraceful *per se* when the body is contorted into unnatural or constrained positions, or the limbs so disposed that they encumber each other; but by association of ideas an action, although neither unnatural



nor ungraceful as regards the co-ordination of body and limbs, may appear relatively awkward and absurd.

Let me give a very familiar illustration. Little children, as we know, frequently express delight by prancing about with a kind of *chassé* or galop step, making an upward movement with their arms to correspond with the movements of their feet. This spontaneous action of a delighted child is a beautiful thing to witness. It appears beautiful because it accords with our ideas of fitness. But suppose some member of the House of Commons, on the passing of a certain Bill, were to express his joyful emotions in a similar manner; even though there might be nothing positively awkward in his movements, the action would impress us as being the very opposite of graceful, because it would be directly opposed to our ideas of propriety or fitness.

Again, there are some elderly people in whom only a staid dignity of demeanour seems becoming. If such were to affect the jaunty manner and sprightly movements of youth they would probably appear ridiculous. On the other hand, however, we occasionally come across people who *naturally* retain a juvenility of manner, even in advanced life, and somehow in such cases we are unconscious of any incongruity in their actions. Their lively demeanour is perfectly graceful because *it is in harmony with their whole being*.

From these and other considerations we may, I think, infer that hard-and-fast rules of deportment will not do alike for all people, and that actions extremely becoming in one person may



convey an impression of mere affectation in another.

Clearly, then, one of the most essential features of gracefulness is to be *natural*. Do not strive to appear other than you really are.

Apart from questions of disposition and moral influences, people who enjoy the reputation of being "naturally graceful" are those who intuitively move the various parts of their body in agreement one with the other, and who make the right movement at the right time.

For example, the act of bending the body forward is not in itself ungraceful, nor is a perfectly upright position necessarily ungraceful; but let either of these positions be assumed in circumstances which demand the other, and it immediately appears awkward. A man walking slowly along a promenade with his back curved outward would look very ungraceful; but not more ungraceful than he would if in rapid rotary motion, as, for instance, in waltzing with a partner, he kept his back rigid, because he would then be dancing in opposition to dynamical requirements.

It is a fact that one of the chief reasons why men, otherwise graceful enough, make such exceedingly awkward waltzers is because they throw their chests forward at precisely the juncture when the centrifugal action demands that they should curve their backs outward.

It is, of course, possible for people to struggle round in waltzing merely by the muscular action of the lower limbs, without due regard to the correct movements of the upper part of the body, although the motion in such cases necessarily

appears ungraceful. But in the act of swinging oneself, when no leverage can be obtained by contact with the ground, it will be found absolutely impossible to keep the swing in motion unless the action of the entire body is in strict accordance with physical laws.

The manner in which this is accomplished is simple enough if we know what to do. It is only necessary to make a slight downward muscular effort as soon as the swing reaches either extremity of the arc it describes, and to keep the body *always curved outward* from the centre of oscillation. Thus, whenever the swing is going forward from the perpendicular, the chest will be thrown out, while in going rearward from the perpendicular the chest will be drawn in and the back curved out, the curve of the body being always concave to the centre.

There are few exercises better adapted to impart gracefulness than swinging, because it cultivates the natural action of the spinal column, and, in cases where it is not attended with nausea, is exceedingly healthful.

Perhaps if a number of children were placed on a swing for the first time, one after the other, it would be found that those who were able to keep the machine in motion by their own efforts, when once a slight impetus had been given, would be the children likely to become the best dancers. Anyhow, they would be the ones possessing the greatest natural aptitude for the art.

One of the most essential requirements towards gracefulness in a posture or movement is that there shall be no appearance of difficulty in its



execution, and whether facility be the result of natural aptitude or of constant practice, there must be no evidence that the movement or posture is a matter of consideration to the person making it, or all the effect will be destroyed. An excellent example of this may be found on the stage, when we compare the graceful and apparently spontaneous gestures of great actors who make nature their model with the wooden action of "supers" who learn their attitudes by rote.

It is also requisite in a posture which indicates the relative positions of the several members of the body with regard to one another that to be graceful these should be disposed in such a manner as to cause no encumbrance to each other. There should, moreover, be a general roundness of attitude and avoidance of sudden angles.

It has been observed that "at the touch of a tape measure the secret of the beauty of the Parthenon springs to light." This, however, is not true. Although the Grecian statues certainly owe something to their perfect proportion, I do not think that we have in this the solution to the mystery of their incomparable charm. I imagine it is rather to be sought in the beautiful and delicate delineation of muscular action, and in the grace and consistency of their attitude. A statue might be perfectly proportioned and still wanting in beauty, just as a face may have regular features and yet be far from pleasing. It seems to me that pose and action are to the form what expression is to the countenance. The Apollo Belvedere would not look of much account represented with his arms akimbo and his knees turned



in. Of what avail would be perfect proportion and symmetry of limb to render a statue beautiful if treated thus ?

Again, as a further illustration of propriety or fitness being essential to gracefulness, if the image of a *man* were posed after the manner of "the statue that enchants the world" it is certain that the erstwhile lovely graceful attitude would, in the changed conditions, appear feeble and absurd. Also the statue of a woman, if represented standing like the "Hercules at Rest," would, however perfectly proportioned, seem wholly devoid of grace ; indeed, without going to such extremes as changing sex, I doubt if any alteration of circumstances, any transposition or change of attitude, could be effected in the renowned statues of antiquity without in some measure detracting from their beauty.

There are, it seems to me, certain qualities of gracefulness analogous in all things. A too perfect regularity of outline would destroy the charm of any landscape. A building, of which both sides are exactly alike, does not appear so picturesque as one of irregular construction, a fact exemplified in the works of Claude and Turner, whose palaces, although exquisitely symmetrical, are never of monotonous uniformity. It is true that both sides of the human body are externally alike, but continual variety of form is produced in action, because it does not, generally speaking, come natural to make precisely the same movements with opposite limbs, and in the slightest lateral deflection of the body from the perpendicular the curve of outline on either side becomes different.

Although there are exceptions—as, for instance, in preparing to take a leap or dive—I think we may take it as a general rule that an attitude appears graceful in proportion as the limbs on either side of the body are differently employed.

Man, from his power of maintaining an erect position, is enabled to assume a greater variety of attitude than are the lower animals; but this quality, while it enhances his grace and beauty, diminishes his speed, as much of the muscular energy in the lower limbs is expended in supporting the body.

We have an example of the pleasing effect of contrary action of corresponding or opposite members in the strathspey, wherein the right arm is raised when the left foot is extended, while the left arm is placed akimbo, and *vice versa*, so that there is always a diagonal line, so to speak, across the body from hand to foot. We may also perceive how ungraceful is the effect of having the same arm and leg extended when persons ignorant of the fact attempt to dance in this manner, as those who have not been properly taught often do.

The extension of both limbs on the same side—except under certain conditions to be hereafter discussed—is inelegant on account of the awkward angles generally formed; but beyond this the position does not accord with the natural movements of the limbs. In walking or running the right arm moves synchronously with the left leg, and the left arm with the right leg, the action of the human members corresponding to the movements of the fore and hind legs of animals.

Those who would acquire a really graceful



carriage of the body should cultivate the habit of retaining a perfect balance on either foot, since grace in movement depends much on the nice adjustment of the centre of gravity, which must in all cases be accomplished without conscious or apparent effort. This is necessary in simple walking, and, as we shall presently see, in terpsichorean exercises it is indispensable. The beauty and also the difficulty of the *real* minuet step and of most ballet movements consists in the perfection of balance required in their execution.

So long as no apparent effort is being made to retain the equilibrium and the position is a natural one, the idea of a body being perfectly supported on a small base is generally pleasing. There are statues of this description that doubtless owe much of their charm to the fact of the beholder feeling conscious that they are perfectly balanced, as, for instance, Bologna's "Mercury"; but the state of mental uneasiness produced by seeing a figure or picture either of man or animal in a position which conveys the impression that the balance could not possibly be maintained, will probably have been experienced by most people—a sensation which, absurd as it may appear, will sometimes remain long after the object which caused it has ceased to be visible. The Leaning Tower of Pisa made quite an uncomfortable impression on the writer, an impression which considerably detracted from the effect of its architectural beauty.

The kind of gracefulness that we are accustomed to term "natural gracefulness" is by no means always concomitant with correctness of deport-



ment in a conventional sense. We often come across people who conduct themselves socially in a manner to which no exception could possibly be taken. They may have been taught to enter a room in quite the correct way, to sit down gently on a chair without "flopping," to rise without losing their balance, to express cordiality in hand-shaking without being unduly demonstrative; they may have been taught all this and various other little amenities of civilized life, and they may have gone through no end of school drilling and so-called "hygienic exercises"; yet withal their actions appear wholly wanting in *real gracefulness*. On the other hand, however, we not infrequently see people—girls mostly—who have had no instruction in these things, who have no ideas of deportment beyond their own intuition, yet whose whole bearing may be described as "charming," who move and pose their limbs in a way that would be utterly beyond the power of many ladies who have been all their lives studying artificial correctness of demeanour.

That unfortunate Queen of France, Marie Antoinette, has always been regarded as an embodiment of grace and loveliness—"surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision." Yet her manners and deportment could scarcely be termed "correct" in the conventional sense, as, for instance, when at the drawing-room held at La Muette she laughed in the faces of the old ladies who had deemed it their duty to attend, because "from the stiffness of their demeanour and the antiquated fashion of their habiliments they appeared

ridiculous''; or when, having slipped off a donkey during an outburst of laughter, instead of immediately rising, she sent for Madame de Noailles, or Madame l'Etiquette, as she preferred to call her, to ascertain the prescribed behaviour of a Queen of France who could not keep her seat upon a donkey.<sup>1</sup>

But in spite of her unconventional behaviour there is no doubt that Marie Antoinette was at all times charming and graceful; never more so, perhaps, than when dressed as a simple country girl, with straw hat and apron, she watered her plants in the Little Trianon.

These observations are only intended to show that real gracefulness is not necessarily included in what is known as correct deportment, and may even exist quite independently of it. When gracefulness is naturally present in the individual, ordinary rules of conduct and action may suffice to impart elegance and finish; but when it is wholly absent, its culture—presuming that it may be cultivated—must be developed by entirely different means.

And no doubt a good deal may be done by judicious training of the muscles and regulation of movement, even when there are natural defects in the bodily proportions. As William Hazlitt observes: "A man may have a mean or disagreeable exterior, may halt in his gait, or have lost the use of half his limbs; and yet he may show habitual attention to what is graceful and becoming in the use he makes of all the power he has left—in the 'nice conduct' of the most unpromising and impracticable figure."

<sup>1</sup> *Hayward's Essays.*



The above is, perhaps, an extreme case, but from personal experience I can aver that there are ways and means by which a naturally awkward and even mis-shapen child or person may, so to speak, be taught the art of gracefulness. The kind of culture to which I allude does not come under the head of gymnastics, nor is it included in those exercises formerly known as "callisthenics," and certainly it had no place in the old school of "deportment." It is something altogether apart from these. It must be directed entirely to the individual. It must take into account all personal idiosyncrasies, and should not be attempted by anyone ignorant of the principles of human mechanism.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE BEAUTIFUL IN DANCING

MY object in the present chapter is to point out some of those qualities in dancing which, apart from ephemeral crazes and periods of recrudescence, have, by general consent of the finest exponents and most enlightened critics in all times, been accounted worthy of admiration.

It is certain that all persons do not possess the same capacity for experiencing pleasurable sensations arising from contemplation of the purely beautiful. Some, indeed, are singularly deficient in this respect. Dr. Johnson even maintained that there was no such thing as beauty apart from utility. As William Blake, the poet, observed: "The tree that will move one man to tears is to another only an object that stands in the way." People are generally satisfied with that to which they are accustomed; they are unable to distinguish between what appeals to their fancy, and that which is better adapted to afford æsthetic gratification.

From the fact that dancing of a very inferior order, though not, perhaps, egregiously bad, often meets with approval, and attracts considerable attention, while conscientious efforts to uphold the dignity of the art fail to secure due recognition,

it is evident that the public taste is much at fault. Yet it has been my happy experience that people of ordinary intelligence can readily perceive what is beautiful or otherwise in dancing, when once the true principles which govern the steps, movements and attitudes have been clearly explained and demonstrated.

As in painting, persons of uncultivated taste are often attracted by crudities of form and colouring, so in dancing the uneducated eye is often attracted by crudities of pose and movement. And, again, people are sometimes more interested in witnessing the kind of dancing which they think they could themselves imitate than they would be in watching feats, however wonderful or beautiful, which they regard as being wholly beyond their own capabilities.

Hence the success which frequently attends the performances of amateurs. Hence, also, much of the success which for a time at least attended the exhibitions of so-called "tango" and "maxixe" dancing. Certainly there was nothing intrinsically beautiful in the dances themselves, which, with a few exceptions, were demonstrated by exponents ignorant of the first principles of the art of dancing—German waiters masquerading under Spanish names and girls into whose antecedents it were better not to enquire, but who, like their partners, had "picked up" a few easy steps and figures with a view to making a little money while the craze was on. I do not blame *them*. The public did not know sufficient about dancing to detect their very amateurish efforts, and certainly could not tell if the dances were being correctly shown.



## 70 DANCING FOR STRENGTH AND BEAUTY

Personally, whenever I have seen a male dancer holding his partner tightly against him, and seeming to force her downward on bent knees, as some of them did in showing the movement called *el corte*, my mind has involuntarily reverted to the ancient rhyme :

Treat the woman tenderly, tenderly,  
Out of a crooked rib God made her slenderly, slenderly,  
Straight and strong he did not make her,  
Let love be kind or else ye'll break her.

All such movements, apart from their intrinsic ugliness, are in direct opposition to those chivalrous principles that have always—theoretically at least—dominated the social dancing of highly civilized nations. Such principles were recognized in the days of Plato, and culminated more than two thousand years after, in that noblest of all chivalrous, manly dances, the grand old *menuet de la cour*.

Unfortunately, however, the minuet is a dance concerning which the great majority of people have altogether mistaken ideas—ideas fostered by absurd and wholly incorrect exhibitions on the stage and elsewhere, by exponents quite ignorant of the true construction and significance of the dance.

The essential characteristics of the minuet I will explain at length in a separate chapter. For the present let us consider those elements of beauty which apply to the art of dancing generally. And here I would address my remarks more especially to the unprofessional reader, for the present avoiding technical details as far as possible, and confining myself to such beauties and defects



as may be apparent to any intelligent observer if only they are clearly pointed out.

One reason why people often fail to appreciate what is really good in dancing is that the admirable features of a performance are simply overlooked. The steps of a dance may be so varied, and the movements succeed each other so rapidly, that, unless the spectator is previously aware *what special points to look out for*, he fails to perceive them. By way of analogy, an ordinary rapid reader might open a volume of Wordsworth, and glance through the lines composed near Tintern Abbey without being particularly impressed. But if he had previously been informed that this poem contained passages of supreme beauty about "unremembered pleasure" and that "something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns," etc., he would have been on the alert to discover the passages, and, having discovered, might not have failed to appreciate their beauty.

It is, then, my desire, reader, to place you in the position of one who has been advised at the outset as to what is admirable in that which you are about to learn or witness, so that if you are a student of the art, you will be in a better position to estimate your teacher's capabilities; or if you are only a spectator, you will be better able to judge the merits or demerits of any dance performance, whether it be social, artistic or dramatic.

Let us take separately some of the qualities which are indispensable in the dancer who aspires to be anything of an artist.

## BALANCE.

As stated in the preceding chapter, balance is one of the most essential points to consider, because no step or movement of the body, however nimble, can appear really beautiful unless the equilibrium of the dancer is kept throughout, and unless it is perfectly sustained in whatever arabesque or attitude the step or movement finishes.

If, for instance, during the execution of a pirouette, or turning of the body once or several times in succession, there is evidence of any displacement of the centre of gravity, or of a struggle in finishing to retain the balance by a spasmodic movement, a jerky shift of position, or awkward adjustment of the limbs, the efforts of such a dancer are not to be admired or applauded.

To be beautiful, a turn or pirouette should seem to finish precisely in the posture or arabesque that the dancer intended, and there should be no apparent effort to retain the equilibrium.

## FLEXIBILITY.

No posture or movement can ever appear beautiful if there is evidence of constraint or undue rigidity in any part of the body where muscular tension is not actually required.

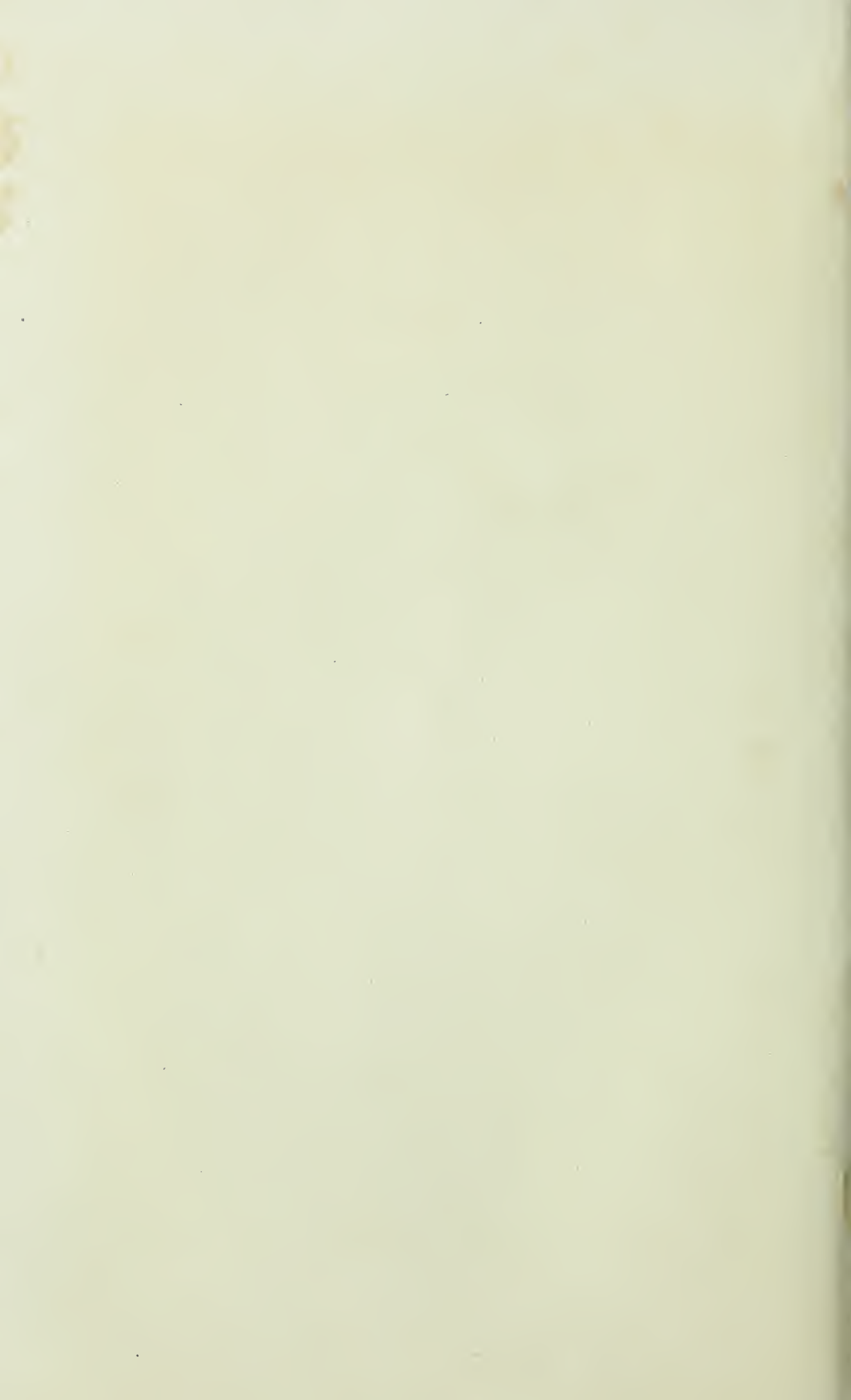
Generally speaking, when movements are made in a forward direction, the body should be erect and the limbs somewhat stretched; whilst when moving in a rearward direction, the body should be somewhat curved and the limbs more bent.

It is certain that the balance is better sustained



II. ATTITUDE FOR BALANCE.





thus. For instance, if after a turn on one foot the body is inclined forward and the raised leg extended backward, the supporting limb should be stretched; while if the body is inclined backward and the raised limb extended forward, the supporting leg should be strongly flexed.

Remember, however, that the knees should on no account be bent forward, but whenever a flexion is made the thigh-bone must be turned well outward in its socket. As regards social dancing, the male dancer who habitually bends his knees, especially if he keeps them forward, presents but a sorry appearance. The practice of habitually bending the knees is as indicative of weakness in a man as it is in a horse.

The ungraceful effect of this habit is, of course, less noticeable among female dancers in a ball-room owing to their frocks; but when clad only in a short or ballet skirt they attempt to move on tiptoe with bent knees the ludicrous and amateurish effect becomes at once apparent. In rising movements the knees should be kept *absolutely rigid*.

### RESILIENCE.

When a dancer leaps high in the air, with limbs extended, alights on the ground and immediately, without break of action, again springs upward, he exhibits the quality of resilience. It is only possible to spring from the ground by previously bending the knees. If on alighting the limbs are stiffened by an involuntary muscular effort, a second flexion must be made before another leap can be taken. This double muscular action, more

or less observable in all inexperienced dancers, must be avoided in repeated continuous movements of a bounding nature. It is only at the finish, or when there is a pause in such movements, that the limbs should be straightened at the moment of impact.

But note particularly that when the feet are crossed and recrossed several times during a leap—that is in the step known as the *entrechat*—the limbs should be straightened immediately on leaving the ground. Whoever bends the knees during the performance of such a movement courts disaster, and his action unmistakably betrays the novice. As the *entrechat* is one of the most brilliant and difficult steps in dancing, it should be more generally cultivated, and its successful performance should always be applauded when seen on the stage.

#### LIGHTNESS.

There is a sensation which I trust all my readers have experienced, or may experience at some time or other in their life. It is generally associated with the tender passion, as when one realizes for the first time that one's affection is reciprocated by the beloved object; but there are also a few other exceptionally happy circumstances that may produce this delightful sensation. Somehow a peculiar elation of spirit is induced which causes one to feel as if he were "treading on air."

Now this is precisely the feeling which some celebrated exponents of dancing appear to have embodied in their art. It is the peculiar charac-



teristic of their style. Among the great dancers of a former generation Mme. Taglioni was specially distinguished for her extreme lightness, and among the more famous modern dancers it may not be invidious to instance Mmes. Pavlova and Genée as patterns of the airy footstep.

There is no need to expatiate on the beauty of dancing in which there is evidence of lightness. It is a fact of which all are aware. The heavy dancer never meets approval on the stage, nor is she likely, when her form is discovered, to have a golden time of it in the ball-room.

There are three kinds of lightness in dancing. First, the lightness shown in high leaping movements, caprioles etc., such as were practised in the gaillarde and other vigorous ball-room dances of Tudor days, but are now rarely exhibited, except on the stage, and then only by expert dancers. I have seen Mme. Genée perform the difficult step known as *ailles de pigeons* beautifully, but as a rule ladies nowadays seem to prefer *terre à terre* movements, or those performed near the ground.

The second kind of lightness is that produced by the avoidance of friction. This belongs chiefly to movements of a gliding nature such as the Viennese waltz, the *pas de basque*, and certain steps of the Polish mazurka. It is acquired by keeping the weight or balance of the body entirely sustained by the limb that is not actually in motion.

The third kind of lightness is that induced by rising and moving on the extreme tips of the toes. This is mainly a female accomplishment, and it

is not to be attained *in perfection* without considerable and arduous practice. There are many children who can move about on tiptoe almost spontaneously, but this is not art; it is not even dancing. The *art* does not consist in moving merely on the toes, but in the brilliance and delicacy with which the steps are performed. Any genuine artist will tell you that this is so; and an artist according to Ruskin is "a person who has submitted to a law which it was painful to obey, that he (or she) may bestow a delight which it is gracious to bestow."

The very greatest dancers have always used this accomplishment sparingly, thus rendering it more effective. Tiptoe dancing is beautiful when really well executed and without apparent effort; but it should not be too long continued, or it may become wearisome for sheer lack of variety.

Observe that the lightness dependent on the tiptoe position is apparent rather than real, since, clearly, the dancer does not weigh an ounce less when she is on her toes than when she is on her heels. It is the muscular resilience when the heel is raised and lowered that counts. In estimating the skill of the toe dancer mark well the perfection of balance and straightness of the limbs.

#### VARIETY.

Any frequently repeated step or movement, however beautiful *per se*, soon becomes monotonous to spectators if unrelieved by the introduction of other steps or movements. An exhibition of dancing that lacks the charm of variety can never



be pleasing. The efforts of really good dancers are too often spoilt by the lamentable poverty of invention shown by so many arrangers of dances. It by no means follows that a person who is himself or herself a good dancer must needs be a good arranger. I could instance some well-known and justly admired exponents of dancing whose efforts in this direction have proved deplorably ineffective.

The really skilful dance arranger must necessarily be endowed with poetic feeling and fertile imagination. He should possess a knowledge of many subjects besides dancing. He must understand music, and have at least some acquaintance with the sister arts, poetry and painting. He should know something of geometry, and, if he would attempt the reconstruction of old-time or ancient dances, he must assuredly study the history and traditions of past ages.

Said Benjamin West, the artist, to Constable: "Young man, remember that light and shade never stand still." The great charm of a landscape is variety, and *dancing should be as varied as the ever-changing face of nature.*

In the dance light and shade are represented by extended and closed positions of the limbs, by the alternation of the dignified with the brilliant, the pathetic with the gay. Thus in Mme. Pavlova's exhibition you had first the dying swan, and then the joyous Bacchanalian dance which seemed, as it were, to breathe the very spirit of *juventus mundi*.



## BREADTH.

As in drawing, a certain breadth of treatment denotes power and is generally admired, so in dancing extended positions of the limbs are generally considered more beautiful than those in which the movements are restricted and the limbs doubled up so as to form acute angles at the joints.

The aim of the dancer should be to express extreme neatness and precision of movement when the closed positions are employed, and breadth in the more open ones, thus accentuating the effect of light and shade to which I have already drawn attention. For instance, in the execution of *entrechats* the limbs should be kept quite close together and well stretched so that the calves actually touch in crossing and recrossing; while in side *caprioles* the raised limb should be extended as widely apart from the supporting one as possible both before and after the beating.

The arms may be raised to their highest or extended to their widest limit, provided such positions accord with the step or movement to be executed, or they may be gracefully rounded. They should seldom be doubled up, and *never* allowed to hang aimlessly at the side. Breadth denotes the artist; niggling and restricted arm action betrays the novice.

## FACILITY.

"*Ars celare artem*," runs the old tag, and nowhere is true art more observable than in the

ability of accomplished dancers to perform a difficult feat as if it were the easiest thing imaginable. A movement, step, or dance loses all charm if it appears arduous or fatiguing or beyond the performer's grasp.

It is far more pleasing to watch a simple dance well executed than a more difficult one that evidently taxes the dancer's powers. Hence the kind of dancing alluded to in a previous chapter, in which the performer relies for applause on the fact of the audience being aware that he is severely exerting himself on their behalf, is dancing of a very inferior order, and scarcely to be regarded as within the domain of art.

In showing the volta at my lecture on "Classic and Ancient Dancing," in addition to other somewhat difficult movements we execute the "*saut majeur*," or great leap (of which an illustration is here given) fifteen times in the space of three to four minutes. On one occasion a spectator remarked after the performance: "What surprised me most about the dance was that you did not seem to feel the exertion at all." "No," I replied, "that is the result of practice. We always try to make such movements appear as if they cost us no effort whatever."

I have read that one of our celebrated lady dancers once had the misfortune to injure one of her toes during a performance. After the dance she had just time to reach her dressing-room when she fainted. On removing her shoe it was found to be saturated with blood; but notwithstanding the severe pain she must have endured the dancer bravely went through the whole performance,



and no one in the audience was aware that anything had happened.

It is astonishing what facility of movement may be acquired by incessant practice. Steps the most difficult, figures the most intricate, and movements that we know must have cost an immense amount of effort and perseverance, are made by the true artist to appear perfectly natural and easy. Truly the aim of art is to conceal itself, and the genuine dancer, while actually moving *secundum artem*, should always seem to do so *secundum naturam*.

#### GESTURE.

In an earlier chapter a few observations were made on the subject of gesture. This art, also known as chironomy, was brought to a wonderful degree of perfection by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Telestes was so great a master of gesture that in managing the chorus in "The Seven against Thebes" of Æschylus, he made all the transactions plain thereby. In a trial of skill between Roscius and Cicero, it is recorded that the actor or dancer (the terms were almost synonymous in those days) was able to express at least as much by gesture as could the orator by word of mouth. It is related that once at Nero's Court there happened to be staying a prince of one of the tribes of Pontus, who was greatly struck with the excellent dancing of one of the Emperor's slaves. When the time came for the foreigner's departure Nero, who is said to have been generous—perhaps the only thing that could be said in his favour—told him any wish he cared to express



should be granted. "Well," replied the Prince, "if you would only give me the slave whose dancing I so greatly admire, I should indeed be happy." "But what would you do with him in your country?" asked Nero. To which the Prince replied: "I have round me several neighbours who speak different languages, and, since it is not always easy to find an interpreter, I thought if I had this man he could by his dancing make them understand whatever I wished to express."

This last is an instance of the art as applied to purposes of practical utility. But nowadays there is less need for the employment of gesture to express ideas, and so chironomy has ceased to be practised as an accomplishment. Still, we do to some extent express emotion by gesture. If, for instance, we suddenly take hold of something very hot, in dropping the article we are apt, unwittingly, to perform a sort of primitive *ballet d'action*. If we are very angry, we are likely to betray our feelings by signs, if not by words; and even if we are deeply in love, unless we chance to be adepts in the art of dissembling, the unspoken sentiment soon becomes apparent to others.

All this, however, is for the most part involuntary. With the exception of cinematograph performers it is only the ballet dancers who have to depend entirely on gesture or pantomime (in its true sense) for the expression of ideas; and clearly the most perfect artists in this very important branch of dancing are those who can most readily convey a definite meaning to the spectators.

But dancers have this great disadvantage as compared with cinema performers. They may not

appear to be uttering words in the same sense as do the actors; consequently their facial expression is in some degree modified. Moreover, their features are not nearly so observable on the stage as on the film, where the figures are often greatly enlarged.

As regards dancing, simulation of the natural emotions—love, joy, grief, anger, fear, despair, remorse, etc.—becomes easy if the performer can only identify himself or herself with the character and circumstances to be represented, and, for the time being, *actually feel* the emotion required. This, of course, is what mimic artists must do if they wish to impress the audience with a sense of actuality.

Every emotion has its appropriate attitude as well as facial expression. Thus in *fright* the arms are expanded and the fingers spread apart, while in *anger* the arms are contracted and the hands clenched. There are obvious physiological reasons for this into which we need not here enter. In *yearning love* the arms are outstretched towards the object of affection. In *welcoming* a person they would be opened, whilst in *repelling* advances the tendency would be to close or even fold them. The attitude of *abject fear* is quite different from the expansive attitude of *sudden fright* already mentioned. In this case the tendency is to contract the limbs and cringe, as will a dog that is in terror of its master. We are all familiar with the drooping attitude that accompanies *dejection* and the clenchings and contortions of *despair*.

But if you would study seriously the art of appropriate gesture and expression, you cannot do



better than visit the palaces and art galleries of Rome and Florence, for there you will see how the various emotions common to humanity are expressed by the greatest masters of sculpture and painting that the world has known. You will find paternal *anguish* represented in the immortal Laocoon; *pathetic agony* in the Dying Gaul; *innocent joy* in the lovely group of Cupid and Psyche; *modesty* in Canova's Venus; *remorse* in the figure of Judas; *artless purity* in the nude figure with the lamp in Titian's famous but wrongly named picture in the Borghese Palace; *endurance* in the St. Sebastian of Sodoma; *mischievousness* in the Dancing Fawn of Praxiteles, and so on.

But should you be unable to journey so far, you may find splendid examples to study in the Louvre, and also among the modern works in the Luxembourg Galleries. Even without leaving our own shores you may learn a great deal in the National Gallery, the Tate Collection, and the South Kensington Museum, where you will find plaster casts of many of the world's most famous statues. And the advantage here is that you are able to visit them again and again, and gaze at them until their beauty is absorbed into your very being. Casts are excellent, but unfortunately copies of famous pictures are seldom to be relied upon. Still, you have fine originals of Millais, Watts, and Lord Leighton among others of perhaps equal merit. Some people disparage the work of the last-mentioned artist on the ground that his style is "decorative." It may be, but his figures are exceedingly beautiful, while their postures nearly always appear graceful and appropriate.



Surely it is something to delight one's fellow creatures by delineation of the beautiful. Who would not rather have hanging in his room "The Bath of Psyche" than the picture of a monk seated by an open coffin "writing his memoirs after death?" Though the technique may be superb, though there may be no comparison between the two as regards intrinsic value, still the fact remains that Leighton's is lovely while Murillo's is horrible.

In the ballet, subjects that merely harrow the feelings have always been considered by critics of good taste unsuitable subjects for representation. For all that, there are people who delight to have their feelings worked upon, who, however paradoxical it may appear, seem positively to enjoy being made miserable. How else can we account for the success of dramas like *The Green Bushes* and *East Lynne*, in which the agony is not only "piled up," but is also "long drawn out?" This, to me at least, has always seemed exceedingly inartistic and very boring. There is not, so far as I am aware, a consumptive character or one suffering from an incurable complaint in any of the Greek dramas. Our own greatest dramatist kills off his characters quickly, whether by poison, steel, or feathers (as in the case of Desdemona), when they have to die. He never allows them to linger painfully half through a play. Note again how little is said by Shakespeare's characters when once the fatal draught has been taken or wound received. A short dying speech is surely better than a long one. Hamlet's last words "The rest is silence" are magnificent in their directness and simplicity.

But gestures are not employed in dancing merely to express personal emotions. They are also used to convey ideas. It is evident that the mimes of ancient Rome were able to express convictions, sentiments, and intentions thus, even abstract ideas relating to past and future ; and to argue matters out if need be, otherwise the slave of Nero, before mentioned, would have been of little service to the prince who desired him.

There are, of course, ideas and objects that make but little demand on the inventive power of a dancer. *Doubt*, for instance, may be expressed by the employment of both hands as if comparing the relative weight of two bodies ; *objects* and *animals* would be suggested by imitating their special characteristics ; the idea of *space* would naturally call for wide expansion of the arms, and turning the head and eyes in all directions ; while, on the other hand, a *prison* would be best portrayed by very restricted movements. *Darkness* would require the closing of the eyes. A *boat* might be suggested by imitating the action of rowing ; the *sea* by a long undulating motion of the hand in a horizontal direction, as of waves, smooth or rough according to the circumstances of the story, and so on.

The gestures and attitudes employed in dancing should always be beautiful and graceful, except in such special circumstances as positively demand inharmonious action of the limbs or body to express a given idea. Exhibitions of rusticity may also sometimes be essential, as, for instance, in the comic performance of Pyramus and Thisbe in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



Unnecessarily vehement gesticulation should be carefully avoided. It is indicative of bad taste. Nor should more gestures be employed than are essential to convey the dancer's meaning. Over-exuberance of gesticulation in dancing is like tautology in speaking. It shows want of culture. Breadth and simplicity proclaim the genuine artist.

The few circumstances in which strained positions are demanded in dancing are analogous to those in music which call for harsh or clashing sounds, as when the statue of the Commander enters in *Don Juan*, or during the incantation scene in *Der Freischütz*. But as music, however weird, must never degenerate into mere cacophony (except in so-called "futurist" performances), so dancing must never in any circumstances degenerate into mere contortionism.

Dancers who seek to attract attention by twisting and wriggling the body into grotesque and unnatural positions are in no sense worthy of admiration, nor should they be encouraged by applause. The public should learn to discriminate between the art of the dancer and the efforts of the contortionist. The aim of the dancer is to *idealize the natural* in pose and movement. The object of the contortionist is to *distort the natural* and depart therefrom. The contortionist may succeed in exciting wonder, but the aim of the dancer is to afford delight.







III. SIDE BATTEMENT. (MEDIUM.)

Limit of normal action as given by the sculptor Flaxman.

## CHAPTER VII

### **SALUTARY EXERCISES TO PROMOTE STRENGTH AND BEAUTY**

ALL teachers of the art of dancing should possess some knowledge of anatomy. By this I do not mean that they need the kind of knowledge essential for the practice of therapeutics; but they should understand the mechanism of the human frame in the sense that it is necessary for artists to understand it. Moreover, some knowledge of physiology will help them to discover what kind of exercises are beneficial to the individual pupil, and what kind are best avoided.

It is, indeed, better if the pupils themselves are to some extent acquainted with the working of the principal joints and the action of the more important muscles. For this reason teachers might with advantage occasionally volunteer a little information to make the lesson more interesting and intelligible.

As this is not a treatise on anatomy, any elaborate disquisition on that subject would here seem out of place; but there are just a few simple facts to which I should like to draw the reader's attention at the outset, so that he or she may better appreciate the purpose and practical utility of the exercises afterwards to be described.



First, as regards the articulation of the limbs, I would have you remark that the bone of the upper arm, or *humerus* as it is called, has a very unrestricted action, owing to the manner in which its head rotates in the cavity of the *scapula* or shoulder blade, forming what is known as a ball and socket joint. Thus we are able to swing the arm freely in any direction. But where the *humerus* articulates with the two bones of the fore arm—*ulna* and *radius*—a different kind of joint is formed which will only double up and open like a hinge, making, at the elbow, an angle either acute or obtuse as the case may be. Thus, the upper arm swings freely in its socket, the fore arm will only double, while the wrist has a rotatory movement.

The action of the lower limbs is similar. The thigh-bone or *femur*, the longest in the body, is furnished, like the *humerus*, with a globular head, which fitting into the cavity of the *acetabulum* forms a powerful ball and socket joint. The action of the knee is like that of the elbow, the hinge being formed by the junction of the *femur* with the *tibia* and *fibula* or bones of the leg. The rotatory movement of the ankle is, however, much less free than is that of the wrist.

Of the spinal column it is only necessary to say that it is composed of twenty-four distinct bones or *vertebræ*. Some reckon more, but the *os sacrum* in advanced life becomes a single bone. Anyhow, as regards the more important *vertebræ*, seven are given to the neck, and called *cervical*, twelve to the back and ribs, called *dorsal*, and five to the loins, known as the *lumbar* *vertebræ*. The spinal column owes its flexibility to discs of

cartilage placed between the bones, these being sufficiently elastic to allow the column to bend in any direction without injuring the spinal marrow which runs nearly its entire length. It should be remembered that the greatest freedom of movement is in the vertebræ of the loins and neck.

The bending forward of the head is accomplished chiefly at the articulation of the skull with the first vertebra, called *atlas* from the fact of its bearing the globe of the head. The rotary movement of the head towards the shoulders, which is limited to a quarter of a circle, or ninety degrees, in each direction, is accomplished at the articulation of the *atlas* and second vertebra.

Every muscle of the body has its peculiar function. Some bend, while others straighten the limbs. The former are generally spoken of as *flexors*, and the latter as *extensors*. Some muscles turn the parts in one direction, others the opposite way, and there are muscles which maintain the erect position and various attitudes of the body. We need not here consider the muscles which in contraction act upon the walls of cavities to which they are attached, or what are termed the involuntary muscles. It is with those which act in response to the nervous influence transmitted from the brain through the nerves that we are more directly concerned; and I may observe that one of the main objects of dancing, *as considered in this treatise, is to stimulate the action of sets of muscles that are not ordinarily brought into play in our daily avocations.*

DANCE AND KEEP YOUNG is a maxim I would strongly urge on all alike, whether you are already



for some time a dweller in the House of Life, or scarcely, as it were, past the threshold. For be it known that changes take place in the muscular function at different periods, and unless we have constant recourse to suitable exercises *our movements become more and more restricted as we advance in years.*

The exercises best adapted to avert this loss of contractile power—and *it may be averted*, as I pointed out in my opening chapter—are those which directly bring into play parts of the body in which the substitution of tendon for muscular fibre is likely soonest to take place, as, for instance, in the lumber and dorsal regions.

Clearly, walking and ordinary movements are not sufficient. There must be bendings and turnings of the body in various directions. People who habitually move about as if the spinal column were composed of a single rigid bone will very soon begin to find their power of bending movement restricted, and as they get on in years will ask someone else to pick up anything they happen to drop. On the other hand, a person who has acquired the art of *genuine dancing*—not mere ball-room movements—and kept up the practice of *bona fide* exercises belonging to the art, may be more agile and pliant at sixty than another at thirty whose daily exercise takes merely the form of a promenade.

It is only by constant practice of judiciously selected exercises that your joints will retain their flexibility and your muscles their resilience.

Waltzing, when scientifically taught and properly practised—which unfortunately it seldom is—forms



an excellent exercise for imparting and retaining freedom of spinal movement. But to waltz with the back held stiff, as so many do, without the natural spiro spinal action is useless so far as physical benefit is concerned.

We must, however, leave the consideration of the waltz to another chapter. At present I will describe a few exercises and movements the practice of which is absolutely necessary for all who wish to become first-rate dancers and to derive real benefit from their art.

It is essential at the outset that you should learn the fundamental positions of the limbs.

Let us begin with the legs.

In the *first position* the heels are placed close together, while the toes are separated as widely as possible, forming an angle so obtuse as to become almost if not quite a straight line.

In the *second position* the heels are separated usually by the length of one's own foot, and the toes turned completely outward.

In the *third position* the heel of one foot is placed close against the instep of the other foot.

In the *fourth position* one foot is advanced immediately before the other at a convenient distance, as in the act of walking.

In the *fifth position* the feet are again brought close together, the toes of one foot resting against the heel of the other.

Generally in practising the positions one foot supports the weight and balance of the body, and remains flat on the ground in the same spot, while the other foot takes the various positions,

the toes only resting on the floor and the heel raised as high as possible.

In all cases the supporting foot, as well as the shifting one, must be turned well outward, and special care should be taken that the turning be done at the knee rather than the ankle; that is, the thigh-bone (*femur*) must be twisted outward in its socket.<sup>1</sup>

When the pointed foot is extended *midway* between the *second* and *fourth*, or *open positions*, it is said to be in the *intermediate position*.

In the above examples neither foot is actually taken from the floor, but, as a matter of fact, however high the pointed foot is lifted and extended to the side, as in illustrations of the *battements*, it would still be in the *second position*; and however far it may be extended or raised in front of or behind the body, it is still said to be in the *fourth position*.

Now as regards the arms.

In the *first position* they drop vertically on either side of the body, the elbows being turned well outward, and the fingers grouped in the manner shortly to be explained.

In the *second position* the arms are stretched on either side midway between the vertical and horizontal positions, that is at an angle of forty-five degrees from the perpendicular line of the body.

In the *third position* the arms are extended in a horizontal line at right angles to the upright line of the body, the elbows being kept back.

<sup>1</sup> " Rien n'est si necessaire, Monsieur, que le tour de la cuise en dehors pour bien danser, et rien n'est si naturel aux hommes que la position contraire."—Noverre, *Lettres sur la Danse*.



In the *fourth position* the arms are extended on either side, midway between the upward vertical and horizontal positions.

In the *fifth position* the arms are placed high above the head, with the elbows turned outward and the fingers of each hand a little curved so that the arms have a slightly rounded appearance.<sup>1</sup>

The fingers should generally be grouped thus: The second and third close together, the first and fourth a little apart, and the thumb curved slightly in a line with the middle finger.

This, of course, is not the only grouping of the fingers allowable, as you are aware from remarks that have already been made, but it is the one generally chosen by artists and sculptors as being most beautiful. Try other groupings. For instance, try separating the two middle fingers, and you will quickly discover how awkward it looks, especially if the outer ones are kept close. But remember that, generally speaking, the fingers should neither be kept too stiff nor yet too much doubled up. The two middle ones may be slightly curved, and the outer ones almost straight.

The arms may be, as I have already stated, fully outstretched in almost any direction, or they may be gracefully curved. Less frequently should they be doubled up, except in cases where they are placed akimbo, as in the jig, reel, strathspey, and other national dances, or as in the hornpipe

<sup>1</sup> Authorities differ with regard to the order of arm positions. That here given is the most simple and useful for teaching purposes, and is easily remembered. If we allow that in each case the arms may be rounded to any degree or fully extended, it will be seen that all graceful positions are embraced.



where they are folded to typify an attitude of serenity amid distracting circumstances.

In the art of dancing the limbs are generally employed in what is termed "opposition"; in fact, they move thus naturally in walking like the fore and hind legs of animals. In dancing when, for instance, we raise the right arm in, say, the *fourth position* it would be right to extend the left leg in the *second position*, because if we had both the extended limbs on the same side the attitude or arabesque would appear badly balanced.

Now, assuming that you have learnt and practised all the above positions thoroughly, with each limb in turn, so that you can place your arms or feet in any of them without a moment's hesitation, you may try the following exercises which, if conscientiously practised, will do much to bring the muscles of your lower limbs under control.

Stand with your feet in the *first position*, heels together, toes apart, weight resting equally on each leg. Your arms may be extended each in the *second position*, or midway between the downward vertical and horizontal.

Completely raise the right heel, leaving the toe only pointed on the floor, so that the balance is now sustained absolutely on the left leg.

*Very gradually* raise the left heel from the floor, and in doing so *slowly* allow the right heel to descend. Thus there will be a juncture in which the centre of gravity falls between the two feet and passes *smoothly* over to the right leg as the heel thereof sinks to the ground and the left heel is completely raised.

The great art in practising a movement of this

description is to do it in such a manner that there is not the least sign of hiatus or break in the action, and so that it would be impossible for an observer, however keen, to perceive precisely the instant when the balance passes from one limb to the other.<sup>1</sup>

The movement above described should be practised by turns in various positions. There are steps used in dancing in which the change of balance from one limb to the other should be sudden, crisp and marked, such, for instance, as the *pas coupé* and *pas jeté*; while there are other steps in which the change should be smoothly effected as, for example, the *pas de bourrée* and *pas grave*. These latter are the steps which the above exercise enables pupils readily to accomplish. In waltzing the action of the limbs should be perfectly smooth and the change of balance imperceptible, but the movement must be animated, and on no account should the foot be permitted to drag so as to cause friction. In the real *pas de menuet*, which is *different from any other step used in dancing* and now known to very few teachers, both the crisp and smooth actions of the limbs are employed; but this I shall explain in treating of the dance itself.

The next exercises which it is *absolutely necessary* that the would-be graceful dancer should practise are the various extensions and beatings of the limbs, technically known as *battements*. I

<sup>1</sup> It is better when practising this and other exercises to do the movements rhythmically to well-marked music in three or four time, whichever goes better. From a hygienic point of view there is nothing finer than rhythmic exercise.



say the next, but do not take this to mean that the exercises must be learnt in any particular order. This can be left to the teacher's discretion. All are of great importance, and the practice of none can be dispensed with by him or her who aspires to become an accomplished dancer.

The main physical object of practising the *battements* is to impart perfect freedom of action to the lower limbs. The movements of the arms in our ordinary avocations and pastimes are more diversified than are those of our legs, and we often have occasion to swing them outward as well as to and fro ; in fact, we extend and use them in all positions and directions. Hence the joints naturally act more freely. As regards the legs, however, although we frequently bend the knees in sitting, if not in devotion, and although in running or walking the thigh-bone at every step swings like a pendulum in its socket, as already explained, it is certain that movements which cause the ball of the *femur* to rotate so that the knee turns *outward* and the leg swings *sideways* seldom occur.

*Yet these are amongst the most essential movements in the art of dancing.* From an artistic point of view they are most beautiful ; indeed, they are natural too ; but they are movements we are *quite unaccustomed to employ*. Hence the difficulty which beginners in dancing always experience in making the action of their lower limbs conform to the conditions imposed by art.

And can you not see that by practising such exercises you not only facilitate your progress in beautiful dancing, but at the same time *increase*







IV. HIGH BATTEMENT. (HORIZONTAL.)

Result of training.

*your power of movement and the scope thereof?* Surely it must be physically beneficial to practise movements which, whilst admirably accordant with the principles of human mechanism, are yet such as we neglect to perform in daily life.

In practising the *battements* it is well to have a bar fixed near the wall of the room, or at least to take hold of something that you can firmly grasp. This will enable you to retain your balance on the supporting limb and raise the moving one higher than you would otherwise be able to. Anyhow, do this at the beginning, and if you have not a bar, the bedrail or some other object must suffice for your purpose.

In the illustration marked "High *Battements*" which shows one of my pupils practising, the girl is not holding a bar, nor has she any support; yet note carefully the downward bend of the raised foot, for this requires an effort, and you will find it exceedingly difficult to get the leg and foot extended thus. These are the *grands battements* in the *second position*, sometimes in theatrical parlance termed "side practice." You will not, of course, be able to raise your foot nearly so high at first, but by perseverance you can gradually get the limb to work more freely. If, however, you can never raise it beyond the position shown in the plate marked "Medium Extension," the practice will still do you an immense amount of good. The foot should be lowered in the *fifth position*, extended again, and brought down alternately before and behind the supporting limb rhythmically in time with the music. Always make an effort to stretch the limb well out when



it reaches the highest point, and, when done *to the side*, the knee should *turn up*, which means that the thigh-bone is twisted outward, as it should be, in its socket.

It is naturally easier to throw the foot out in front than to the side, because that is the way we are accustomed to swing the leg in walking ; but remember always that while high *battements* are artistic and essentially beautiful, what used to be known as "high kicking" is a practice that has no place whatever in the art of dancing. It is merely gymnastic, because in dancing no such movement as a kick is recognized at all.

Note that when the leg is raised high in front the knee should not be turned up so much as outward, and it must always be turned well outward when the leg is raised behind.

It is good also to practice the *battements* with the moving toe just resting on the floor, passing it quickly before and behind the supporting foot.

In what are termed *petits battements* on the instep the joints of both knees and thighs are brought into play, the former by their flexion performing the *battement*, while the latter, by turning outward, direct the position of the limbs. The toe of the moving foot just touches the ground, and the purpose of the dancer is to cross it before and behind the supporting limb so rapidly that it is impossible for one to count the movements. In this exercise both knees must be turned completely outward.

When no bar is used, so many *battements* should be made with one limb—say seven, crossing before and behind alternately. Then for the eighth

measure the moving foot may be brought down softly in the *first position* to sustain the weight and balance of the body (*changement de point*), while the opposite limb is, in its turn, raised to perform the *battements* before and behind. The change of balance from one limb to the other may take place at either the fourth or eighth bar of the melody, the latter division being more usual. The arm opposite the moving limb may occasionally be raised in the *fifth position* as shown in the plate. Sometimes the pupil may remain balanced on the flat foot, and sometimes rise completely on the toes as the moving limb is extended.

It is impossible to insist too strongly on the fact that no step or movement in dancing can be really graceful unless a perfect balance be maintained throughout its execution. In the ordinary avocations of life we are continually, if unconsciously, adjusting the centre of gravity of our bodies, or that point about which all the parts equally balance each other. We do this automatically from habit, otherwise we should be constantly falling down like infants when they are learning to walk. It is, as of course you know, necessary, in order to retain the equilibrium, that a vertical line drawn from the point known as the centre of gravity—of which the position is constantly changed by any extension of limb or inclination of the body—must fall somewhere within the base formed by the feet or foot whereon the body rests. So long as this condition is maintained you are perfectly safe from falling, even though you are balancing yourself only on the toes



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of one foot ; but, clearly, the smaller the base the more difficult will it be to adjust the centre of gravity.

Suppose you are standing in the *first position*, with the weight sustained equally on each foot, the centre of gravity—provided you stand evenly—will fall exactly between them. Now, in order to raise and extend one of your limbs in any open position, forward, rearward, or to the side, and *to keep it so extended*, you must first shift your centre of gravity to the supporting foot and incline more and more in the opposite direction as the limb is raised. Thus, if raised in front of the body you will incline backwards, if raised behind you must lean forwards, if raised to the right you must incline to the left, and *vice versa*. You will note a marked inclination of the body in some of the illustrations. In side extensions the body should incline in a straight line *from the ankle upwards*, and not from the waist, or the inclination will become too pronounced ; but the requisite amount of inclination must be made, or you will have to lower the raised limb immediately to save yourself from falling.

Now practise raising *the limbs* and keeping them *extended* thus in each of the open positions as shown in the illustrations, and also place your arms as they are there shown. The attitudes may at first be greatly modified and the limbs only slightly raised ; but by degrees you will be able to raise and extend them more and more.

Having learnt to pose in each of these attitudes or arabesques as some are technically termed



while resting on the flat foot, try rising on the toe and again sinking on the heel of the supporting foot, without in any way disturbing the positions of the body, arms, or raised leg.

When you have acquired some facility in this practice, you may attempt turning round on the sole of the foot in the various attitudes or arabesques, sinking on the heel at each quarter of the circle. Be careful at first not to change the relative positions of your limbs as you go round, or you will shift your centre of gravity. But when *after much practice* you have learnt to adjust this to the new conditions, you may change from one attitude or arabesque to another *while turning*, as accomplished dancers do in the execution of pirouettes.

Meanwhile, do not attempt the more difficult attitudes in turning until you have thoroughly mastered the easier ones. It is not by *rushing* through the exercises that you will acquire proficiency in dancing, but rather by easily graduated and continuous practice in which *festina lente* should be always your motto.

There are occasions in dancing when the limbs should be stretched to their fullest extension and kept perfectly rigid ; and there are occasions when the knees should be strongly bent and the body lowered by a vigorous contraction of the flexor muscles, these being mostly situated at the back of the limb. There are also occasions when the muscles should be absolutely relaxed, as, for instance, in the second and fifth steps of the genuine waltz, when no muscular tension whatever need be employed, but the limb, being allowed to

swing freely in its socket, should move to its required position solely by the action of gravitation.

As I pointed out in a previous chapter, in those attitudes in which one leg is raised and extended to the rear of the body equilibrium is generally better sustained by a forward inclination of the body and rigid extension of the supporting limb; while in attitudes in which the raised leg is extended in front of the body equilibrium is better sustained by a slight backward inclination of the body and a strong flexion of the supporting limb.

But the knees must *never, never be bent forward*. This is a rule invariably followed by genuine artists in all civilized countries—a rule only disregarded by beginners and savages. It was neglect of this simple rule that made the ball-room efforts of some so-called “Bostoners” look so absurdly weak and idiotic. It was ignorance of this rule that unmistakably betrayed the amateurish stage efforts of certain would-be exponents of tango and maxixe dancing—exponents who had probably devoted a few weeks to studying the art before appearing in public. Alas, how easily is John Bull fooled! Especially by those astute enough to adopt a foreign alias for the occasion.

To bend the knees forward in dancing stands for all that is weak, ungraceful and decadent. As a matter of fact, in the higher branches of the art, genuflexion is sparingly employed. In the series of figures representing various steps, movements, attitudes and arabesques, which Carlo Blasis had drawn from life to illustrate his *Code of Terpsichore*, the limbs of the dancers are extended in *all except two* examples, one of these



being a decided *plié* or flexion in the *first position* as regards the feet, with arms fully stretched in the *third* or horizontal position; the other a preparatory attitude for the performance of a *pirouette*.

In *demi caractière* dancing, however, and in Russian and other national dances to which I shall elsewhere refer, downward flexions are frequently made, and with good effect, provided the knees are turned out.

This, then, is the rule :

Whenever the knees are bent in dancing so that the body sinks to a lower elevation, the feet being turned outward, the knees should bend exactly over and in a line with the toes.

Now stand in the *first position* and practise bending the knees thus if possible before a mirror. Do not bend the upper part of the body, but keep it quite erect and see that the weight falls equally on each foot. Sink as low as possible, opening the limbs wide, and rise as slowly as you descend. The arms may be extended in the horizontal position.

It is easy to fall into the error of bending the knees forward, as would a knock-kneed person, even if the feet are turned out; but you must be very careful to avoid doing so.

Flexions conscientiously practised form splendid exercises for strengthening the legs and thighs. You may do them to waltz time, counting sometimes four bars in which to sink and rise very slowly, and sometimes only two.

You may vary the exercise by sliding the right foot to the *second* position, closing the left to the



*first position*, and then making the flexion as above. Repeat the movement in the opposite direction, and continue *ad lib*.

The exercise may also be varied by making, first, a glissade (as above) to the side; then, after closing the feet, a downward flexion; then an extension, or rising on to the tips of the toes; and again a downward flexion to finish. After which the whole movement is repeated in the opposite direction.

The above exercises are, as I said just now, excellent for developing the muscles of the lower limbs and should be frequently practised. Now I will describe an exercise specially adapted for promoting gracefulness.

Place yourself in exactly the same attitude as the little girl in the plate marked "Classic Movement," resting on the left foot, with the right toe pointed in the *intermediate position*, the left arm raised in the *fourth position*, the right rounded in the *second position* and kept well away from the body, which is slightly curved outwards.

Any simple tune in mazurka rhythm will do for this exercise.

You have only to advance in a straight direction, if possible before a mirror, changing the relative positions of arms, feet and body at each bar.

When you have done this, say, eight times in going forward, begin stepping backward, changing the relative positions of arms and legs as in advancing, but with a more pronounced rearward curve of the body.

If now you would vary this exercise and extend its scope, take some slow march, or other music

in common time, and, extending both arms, for the first count slide the right foot a little forward; for the second count close the left foot softly to the right heel; for the third count place the right foot a little to the right side, and for the fourth count point the left toe daintily downward in the *intermediate position*. At the same time turn and curve the body to the left, raising the right arm high above the head, and rounding the left arm to look over the same towards the pointed toe.

For the next bar do exactly the counterpart of this, beginning by sliding the left foot a little forward, closing the right, placing the left at the side and delicately pointing the right toe, the left arm being raised high at the finish of the bar.

The relative positions of the arms must be changed *gradually* as the steps are taken. There should be no sudden or twitching movements.

Another excellent but far more difficult exercise will be to balance yourself on the right foot, with the left leg stretched out in the *fourth rearward position* and the arms rounded and *extended forward*, as in the plate marked "Simple Arabesque." When you have secured a *perfect* balance on the flat foot in this position, raise the heel and turn half round on your right leg in the direction of your left hand, but in doing this *neither change the position of the left extended limb nor of your arms*. In consequence if you can manage to retain the balance of the body—which is by no means easy—you will, in finishing the half turn, be looking upwards in the opposite direction, your left leg will be stretched out in the *fourth forward position* and your arms still raised.

The changed position of the left limb is of course accounted for by the rotation of the thigh-bone in the hip cavity, as previously explained.

When you have learnt to do this movement satisfactorily, you may try turning back again; but it is an exercise that will require an immense amount of practice. The more you lean forward in the arabesque, and the further you lean backward after turning, the more difficult will the movement become; but the additional inclination of the body will increase the beauty as well as the difficulty of the exercise.







V. RISING ON THE *POINTE* AND ATTITUDES FOR BALANCE.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PEDAGOGICS OF DANCING

FROM an educational standpoint there can be no doubt that dancing has not, at least in modern times, received anything like the consideration it deserves. It is true that as an accomplishment dancing forms part of the curriculum of most private schools; but it too frequently happens that the methods of teaching employed are of the most perfunctory kind, while the dances and style of dancing imparted to the pupils are of no *educational* service whatever.

Certainly the *educational* object of dancing is not mere promulgation of the latest dances for which there may chance to be a passing craze. Sometimes, unhappily, dances have been introduced which no conscientious teachers would dream of imparting in an educational class for children; knowing as they do that neither physical nor moral benefit is likely to accrue from their practice.

But although modern methods of teaching dancing leave much to be desired, in looking back through the long ages during which we are able to trace the history of the art we find that there have been times when it has been considered an essential branch of education. We have sculptured evidence, to which I have already alluded, that



dancing was not only taught but *well* taught in ancient Thebes. It was also excellently taught in Athens and in Sparta where children, according to the regulations of Lycurgus, began to receive instruction *immediately they reached the age of five*. The Spartans, we know, had some very peculiar views on education, but in this, at least, they were sound. In the early days of Rome, during the intervals of the Punic wars, the children of the senators were taught to dance, and the greatest among the patricians took part in the dances. It was not until the period of Rome's decadence that dancing as a social pastime fell into disfavour. On the stage, however, the art was cultivated to the highest perfection throughout the Empire's decline.

In the Middle Ages dancing as an art was much neglected, but its cultivation was revived during the Renaissance period; and in the "spacious days" of Elizabeth it was considered a *sine qua non* that all people with any pretensions to gentility should receive instruction in the art. Gentlemen of the Inns of Court were enjoined to learn dancing because the practice thereof "made them better fitted for their books." It should be borne in mind, however, that the dances of Tudor times were of a nature calculated to improve the physical and moral condition of the dancer. For instance, the practice of the pavane developed dignity of bearing, the volta brought the muscles into vigorous action, and the gaillarde produced extreme agility and alertness, as you may conclude from the illustrations herein given.

In France, previous to the Revolution, the art

of dancing was taught by men of genuine artistic, musical, and even literary attainments, just as in ancient Greece it was taught by some of the most distinguished poets and dramatists. In consequence the social dancing of those days was remarkable for its refinement, grace and chivalrous symbolism. No suspicion of vulgarity was then allowed to encroach upon Terpsichore's domain.

But although so much cannot truthfully be said of dancing during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the present one, there are still at least a few good teachers. The art of dancing is still well taught by those who, recognizing it as an important branch of education, steadfastly uphold its most honoured traditions and refuse to be seduced from their integrity. The genuine teacher, who is also an artist, could no more bring himself or herself to impart movements derogatory to the art than could a genuine musician bring himself or herself to teach pupils to write or play false harmonies or consecutive fifths.

The real object of dancing in an educational sense, as I have elsewhere pointed out, is to cultivate a true perception of gracefulness, to stimulate the æsthetic faculties, and impart perfect control of the muscles in the execution of movements of a finer, more delicate, and more intricate nature than those employed in the ordinary functions of life.

Clearly, such instruction, to be satisfactory, involves considerable practical information, and not a little mental endowment on the teacher's part. A teacher of dancing should, in fact, be



not only well educated in the ordinary sense ; but, in addition to technical skill, which of course is indispensable, a certain amount of scientific knowledge and artistic culture is essential if really good results are to be obtained.

It is to be regretted that to many of those whose occupation it is to impart this particular branch of education the term "dance teacher" applies better than would the more dignified term "teacher of dancing." The distinction is obvious. A teacher of the art of dancing belongs to a different category from that in which the "dance teacher" may be placed. It is not the practice of this or that particular dance that proves beneficial to the children so much as the practice of those beautiful exercises, movements, steps and arabesques that must be taught and mastered before any degree of proficiency in really artistic dancing can be attained.

The beautiful synchronous arm, body, head, neck and limb exercises that belong to the genuine art of dancing are, however, apparently unknown to the ordinary "dance teacher," and in many cases have been replaced by feeble pseudo-physical exercises which are included in the lesson ; but since these belong neither to the domain of gymnastics nor of dancing they are of little use either to develop strength or gracefulness. They more often tend to destroy than promote the latter quality and to defeat the real purpose of the dancing lesson.

It should be generally understood that clubs, bars, dumb-bells and suchlike apparatus have no place whatever in the art of dancing. As I



have already pointed out, gymnastics and dancing instruction are both good, each in its respective way ; but the object of the one is mainly development of frame and muscle, whilst the other is devoted chiefly to the culture of gracefulness in pose and motion. The exercises best adapted to produce these results are not necessarily antagonistic, but they are *altogether distinct*. To pass immediately, as do many teachers, from the practice of dumb-bell exercises, in which the arm is held either vertically or horizontally while the bone of the upper arm (*humerus*) rotates in its socket, to the arm exercises proper to dancing, in which *curved or circular action only is permitted*, is manifestly absurd. Moreover, the mixing up of the exercises naturally confuses the pupils as to the proper management of their arms in dancing.

The teacher of dancing and the teacher of gymnastics should each attend to his or her own business, and the precept embodied in the well-known phrase of Apelles—" *Ne sutor ultra crepidam* "—should be strictly observed on both sides.

I pointed out just now that from an educational point of view greater attention should be given to those movements and exercises which form the real foundation of the art of dancing than to the mere teaching of dances. Even at ordinary school classes pupils should be taught the *battements* in a more or less modified form, various accordant arm movements, and co-ordinate positions of body and limbs. They should be taught to perform and know by their proper technical names all the simpler steps, such as the *jeté*, *coupé*, *glissade*, *bouffée*, *pas de zéphir*, etc., and to sustain a

perfect balance in various positions and graceful attitudes.

But, it may be urged, parents like their children to learn dances. Of course, and so they should *in moderation*. Surely it is better to perform a few dances really well than to do a great many very badly. It generally happens that when children are learning a great number of dances they are not being well taught.

A child may have acquired many *dances* and be able to go through them *after a fashion*, and yet know comparatively nothing whatever of the *art of dancing*. On the other hand, a pupil may thoroughly understand the *art of dancing* and yet have only a small repertoire of dances.

Understand this : It is not the number of dances acquired that denotes the artist, but the perfection of style in which the various movements are executed. The order of steps and figures in dances may easily slip the memory—that is nothing—but the genuine art of the dancer, once learnt, is never forgotten.

A musician will at once understand my meaning when I say that one pupil may have learnt any number of showy pieces and yet know far less about the art of music than another pupil who has never practised anything but exercises.

A music pupil, no matter how many pieces he had learnt, could not justly claim to be a *musician* unless he had also acquired some rudimentary knowledge of harmony and counterpoint. He might claim to be a *player*, but even this claim he could scarcely advance if he did not know the various notes, terms and signs employed in music.



A good deal of misapprehension arises from failure to discriminate between the *act* and the *art* of dancing. The *act* is a purely natural process, one which people can perform without receiving any instruction whatever. So also is it perfectly natural for a person to sing without receiving instruction. A sweet voice is a gift, like the natural quality of gracefulness, and either may be developed to any extent by skilful instruction, *or destroyed by bad teachers.*<sup>1</sup> But although a beautiful voice is a natural gift, who, even possessing one, could undertake to sing the Jewel Song from *Faust* without previously having taken lessons in music; and who, even if naturally graceful, could dance the *traditional gavotte de Vestris* or the *real menuet de la cour* without having thoroughly learnt and conscientiously practised the art of dancing?

The pupil who aspires to become a dancer in the true sense must learn something of the grammar and technique of the art, just as the pupil who aspires to become a painter must learn perspective and chiaroscuro, or as the would-be musician must learn the theory of music.

It unfortunately happens, however, that there are many people professing to teach dancing who are themselves entirely ignorant of the laws by which their art is governed, and who know nothing of its technique.

Young people often come to me for what they call "finishing lessons," and in reply to my

<sup>1</sup> "*Des maîtres mediocres au lieu d'augmenter le nombres des bon danseurs, ne font que le dimmuer; car tout dépend des premiers élémens: un mauvais pli une fois pris, il est presque impossible de l'effacer.*"—*Traite de l'Art de la Danse*. C. Blasis.



questions admit that although they have been receiving class instruction at school for *many years*, they have never been shown the *battements*—the very first thing they should and indeed would have been taught by a qualified teacher. Of side practice they are quite ignorant, and alas! have only been told to turn their *feet out at the ankles*.<sup>1</sup> They do not know even the simplest steps by name, and as to the five arm positions, the various accordant attitudes and arabesques—these are things of which they have not even heard.

Does not this support my contention in an earlier chapter that there is no art concerning which people are generally less enlightened than the art of dancing? Would any educated mother leave her child in the hands of a teacher of music if, after receiving lessons of him or her even for a short time—let alone years—the child could not tell a crotchet from a quaver? Of course she wouldn't; yet parents go on year after year throwing their money away on dancing instruction which is of no possible value from an educational point of view merely because, knowing nothing of the art themselves, they cannot tell if they are being justly treated by the teacher or only fooled.

As already hinted, the methods adopted by some of these *soi-disant* teachers is perfunctory in the extreme. They stand before their pupils and make a pretence of showing certain movements, saying: Now, dears, you must place your feet like this or that. Point your toe here or there,

<sup>1</sup> Thus employing only the *peroneus* muscle instead of combining its action with the hip movement already explained.

make a little jump—so. Now slide your foot in front, or to the side, and so on. But never a word of explanation is uttered, nothing is said about the rules of graceful action, the construction of the various *pas* and *temps* and development of *enchâînements* therefrom. The teacher may be irritable or indulgent, according to his or her disposition, but in either case embarrassing questions are severely discouraged.

The style of teaching frequently adopted at schools and classes, especially where modesty of fee is a greater recommendation on the part of a teacher than proficiency in the art, is much the same as if a music teacher, initiating a pupil into the art of pianoforte playing, were to proceed as follows: "Now, my dear, put your first finger on that note (C). Strike it twice—one, two. That's it. Now put your second finger on the next note (D) and strike it. Now put your thumb on that lower note (B) and strike it. Rest a little on this, and then strike the notes with the first and middle fingers again more quickly—" etc., and behold, the little darling is actually starting to *play a tune*, our old friend "God save the King," right away; while another child, being *properly taught*, is puzzling over the value of a minim and the proper fingering of the scale.

Now, to the person who knows nothing of the art of music, it might seem that the "*tune*" child was making the more rapid progress, especially if she began to extend her repertoire to "Home, Sweet Home," and "Trab Trab" in the same interesting manner. But the person who *does* understand music is well aware that the child



*properly taught at the outset* will soon leave the "tune" child far behind in the race.

And so it is with dancing instruction. The child who correctly learns the various steps and movements employed in the art, who knows them by their proper name, and can correctly analyse their construction, will have become an accomplished dancer, while the "put-your-foot-here-and-there" child is still unable to execute the simplest dance with anything like rhythmic accuracy or artistic perfection.<sup>1</sup>

Assuming that the various *pas*, *temps*, *enchânements*, etc., have been acquired from a competent teacher, dances with accessories such as fans, tambourines, cymbals, or garlands are good to practise provided they are artistically arranged with due regard to *light and shade*, as represented in the dance by contrast of open with close positions of the limbs, by broad with neat movements, and by rapid with *languente* action. Such dances should not only be well arranged, but must be properly taught, and whenever flowing drapery is held by the fingers remember that only such arm movements should be employed as would look equally graceful and harmonious if the arms were entirely free.

The greatest regard should be given to poetic expression. All dancing that is worthy of the name has *meaning*, some *raison d'être*, as it were. Even if the actual significance be vague, the dance should yet be instinct with the personality of the performer.

<sup>1</sup> A few remarks in this and other chapters appeared in a series of articles written by me for the *Dancing Times*. They are reproduced by kind permission of the Editor.



For this reason the term "fancy dancing," although in frequent use amongst amateurs and uninitiated teachers, is generally avoided by the more cultured professors of the art. As a matter of fact the kind of dancing included under this head is usually very poor stuff. One could not imagine a great exponent of the art performing a "fancy dance." It is true that a good many of the so-called "minuets" exhibited on the stage and elsewhere might justly be called "fancy dances," since they have no foundation whatever in historical fact or tradition, and are merely presentments of the arranger's "fancy." The term, however, is one that the genuine student of dancing would do well to avoid.<sup>1</sup>

As regards tiptoe dancing, there has for some time past been a tendency in children's classes to push the practice beyond the limit when it proves beneficial, involving as it does no considerable muscular strain. It is stated that in the Imperial Russian School of Dancing toe practice is or was not attempted until the whole groundwork of the art had been thoroughly mastered, probably not until the pupil had been learning two or three years. This, of course, is as it should be. To the pupil who intends taking up the art professionally the practice of tiptoe dancing may be more or less essential; but from a purely *educational* point of view it is of little service, since nature never intended us to walk on tiptoe.

The practice of *rising on the toes*, however, as

<sup>1</sup> I have on one or two occasions used the term "Fancy Dancing" in deference to the wishes of publishers; but, personally, I much prefer the term "Artistic Dancing."

already pointed out, is decidedly beneficial, and even dancing on the toes judiciously and *in moderation* may be not without advantages. But long-continued and ill-regulated efforts may tend to produce disastrous effects on the growing child. Anyone who understands physiology must be aware that this kind of exercise *if carried to excess* tends to overstrain the muscles, with the result that excess of fibrous tissue is formed, and there is corresponding loss of contractile power and resilience.

These remarks are mainly intended as a caution to parents. As I have already pointed out in this treatise, tiptoe dancing is a beautiful art when performed by genuine artists in this particular branch of dancing who have devoted the time and somewhat arduous practice necessary before anything like perfection can be attained. But beyond general hints and directions and supervision of work, success in this accomplishment *depends less on the teacher's skill than on the pupil's perseverance.*

People who do not understand the technique of dancing are apt to think that pupils who move with a certain degree of facility on the tips of their toes must have a clever teacher. But it does not follow. There are many children who move about on tiptoe quite spontaneously. This, clearly, is no credit whatever to the teacher, nor should the teacher be blamed if a child is either averse from or unable to perform this movement. The teacher's responsibility rests rather on the manner of execution than on the nature of the movement itself. Flitting about on the tips of



the toes, *per se*, is not art, it is not even dancing. The *art* does not consist in *getting on the toes*, but in the *delicacy with which the steps are performed*, in the *straightness of the limbs* and *perfection of balance* maintained during the performance. Any genuine artist will corroborate what I say.

Moreover, it is mostly the uninformed and badly taught who hold the very mistaken view that unrelieved and monotonous tiptoe dancing is pleasing to spectators. As previously stated, the greatest artists and exponents always impart to their dancing the *charm of variety* in step and movement.<sup>1</sup>

Tiptoe dancing is, in fine, a speciality in the art, which is only beautiful when exhibited in perfection. It is an accomplishment which it is generally better that the amateur should not attempt. It has few if any educational advantages, and may do harm if practised injudiciously.<sup>2</sup> A girl, even if she has acquired the art of tiptoe dancing, may yet be a far inferior performer to another who, for physical reasons or from *artistic preference*, does not rise on her toes beyond the *demi pointe*, as, for instance, in what is termed "classic dancing."

Often I have had young children brought to me whose natural grace of movement has been completely destroyed by premature, forced, or ill-regulated tiptoe practice. Clearly, the best kind of dancing for promoting health, strength and

<sup>1</sup> "*La variété est un des charmes de la nature ; et vous ne pouviez plaire long-temps aux spectateurs, qu'en variant vos compositions.*"—Dauberval.

<sup>2</sup> Especially when the modern ugly, stiff-blocked ballet shoes are worn. These should never be allowed in children's classes.

*real* gracefulness among children is that in which no accessories are employed, in which the movements, poses and arabesques are made with the limbs entirely free, or even bare.

Before leaving this subject I would have the reader carefully note that there is precisely the same difference between the child who has only been taught *dances* and the child who has learnt the *art of dancing* as there is between an *educated* person and one who has merely been *crammed*.







VI. ARABESQUE ATTITUDE.



## CHAPTER IX

### STEPS AND MOVEMENTS TO BE LEARNT AND PRACTISED

IN an earlier chapter I pointed out how all the simple steps used in dancing have developed from those natural movements by which we make progress over the ground, such as walking, running, leaping, sliding, etc. And we have seen how from such movements, employed alternately, in regulated sequences, and at recurring intervals in rhythmic measure, the art of dancing has been evolved. I also explained how, in dancing, these simple movements are and have from time immemorial been subject to certain more or less conventional restrictions imposed by art.

What these restrictions are has to some extent already been shown in the chapters describing "The Beautiful in Dancing" and "Salutary Exercises."

If performed according to the general rules that the knees be turned outward and the toes down, the jump becomes a *jeté*, the slide a *glissade*, and the walk a *pas marché*. But simple steps and movements (*pas* and *temps*) may also develop into other and more complicated steps or movements. The jump or *jeté*, by extended action of the limbs, and the addition of beatings, or

striking of the calves of the legs together, may be elaborated into the difficult *ailes de pigeon* ; and the simple hop or *pas sauté*, in which one jumps and descends upon the same foot, may also by additional effort, and striking the opposite limb, develop into the *capriole*. Again, two or more simple actions of the limbs may be combined to form more ornamental and elaborate steps, as in the *pas de basque*, *pas de sissonne*, etc.

Now, clearly, the proper way to learn dancing, as all *bona fide* teachers are well aware, is to begin by acquiring the various recognized positions of the limbs, both feet and arms, to practise the *battements* and exercises similar to those already herein described, and to learn the simple steps and movements employed in the art, before attempting the execution of dances.

It is only thus that the pupil will learn to dance *grammatically*, so to speak ; for there is a grammar of dancing as of all other arts. I have elsewhere pointed out the analogy between dancing and language. The positions correspond to letters of the alphabet, the simple steps to words, and the *enchâînements*, or step sequences, to sentences. A complete dance is composed of a series of *enchâînements* just as a story, essay, or speech is composed of a given number of sentences.

Young pupils in dancing should be taught to execute the individual steps correctly as they are, or should be taught at school to pronounce words correctly, and they should learn to combine steps without slurring or muddling them, just as in elocution they are taught to pronounce " That last still night " so that it may not be mistaken



for "That lasts till night," and to say "West Street" so that it does not sound like "westreet." Steps in dancing, like the notes in music, may be executed in a *legato* or *staccato* manner, according to the nature of the movement; but they should always *be allowed their proper value*. Therefore, in order to execute any dance correctly, it is necessary to know and practise the individual steps of which it is composed. You may, of course, learn a simple dance such as the so-called "foxtrot" *after a fashion*, by merely imitating the movements of another person, as a parrot learns to talk by repeating what he hears. But in this case you are likely to understand the real significance of what you dance about as much as the bird understands what he says.

We have seen that there are many established rules by which the art of dancing is governed, but the rule most conspicuously followed by "dance teachers"—in a Pickwickian sense—appears to be what is generally known as "the rule of thumb." As I pointed out in the preceding chapter, they adopt the rough-and-ready "do this" and "do that" method without a word of explanation about the true nature and analysis of the particular movements employed.

So, then, the pupil has to learn each dance as if it were something distinct in itself. The steps and movements he acquires in practising one particular dance do not help him, as they should, in acquiring other dances for the simple reason that, not having been taught their true analysis and accurate performance, he fails to recognize

the steps when they again present themselves in different combination.

Here, then, we see the practical advantage of learning in the proper manner. As in architecture the security of the superstructure depends on the solidity of the foundation, so in dancing the ultimate success of the dancer depends upon the firmness of the base upon which his or her art has been built ; in other words, upon a sound knowledge of the rudimentary portion thereof.

The "rule of thumb" method of teaching to which I have alluded is more especially resorted to in imparting social dances. Yet it is not, perhaps, to be expected that people who learn simply for their own amusement would submit to go through a thorough system of training before attempting a simple dance. If only persons who had *thoroughly* mastered the technique of dancing were permitted to practise the art in public, there would be few dancers on the stage and fewer still in the ball-room.

The same may be said of literature. If only those who had *thoroughly* mastered the intricacies of English grammar were permitted to write, the output of books would be small indeed. Is there, in fact, a single book that does not contain some grammatical slip? Even in the works of great writers like Macaulay, Swift, Pope, Addison, Gibbon and Goldsmith errors may occasionally be discovered, while in not a few modern novels they meet the eye on almost every page. So even our best dancers sometimes inadvertently break the rules of dancing, but the ordinary ball-room performer disobeys them in almost every movement.



This, however, is all the greater reason why the rules should be conscientiously studied, and the steps and movements carefully practised. For the pupil who intends making dancing a profession technical knowledge of the art is indispensable, and the amateur who wishes to *benefit physically* by dancing, *as advocated in this treatise*, must also acquire some technical knowledge, and obey the rules of art. Even the ordinary *seeker after amusement* will find the pleasure of dancing increase in proportion as the several movements are correctly executed.

For instance, the person who learns a simple social dance like the polka by the "rule of thumb" method is not at all likely to enjoy it in practice, because unless he has previously learned to execute the *individual steps* of which the dance is composed, he does not acquire the *true feeling* of the combined movement. He simply raises and puts down each foot alternately three times and pauses on the fourth count ; or perhaps he makes three alternate sliding movements with the feet and then a pause. But this is not the polka at all. The polka was once an extremely popular dance. It is still a favourite among the few who can dance it properly. It appears on the programmes at state balls, where it is generally danced with spirit, and it is an excellent dance for children.

But the polka, to prove enjoyable, must be properly taught. The initial movement consists of a *temps levé*, that is a rising on and springing off, say, the right foot, falling momentarily again on the right toe while the weight of the body immediately passes to the left foot which executes a *glissade*



for the first *step* of the dance and first count of the music. The second count is occupied by a *pas coupé* or cut step, the weight passing on to the right foot. The third count is occupied by a *jeté*, in which the balance is thrown on to the left foot, and the fourth count is occupied half by a pause on the *still flexed* left limb and half by the initial *temps levé* on the left foot previous to recommencing the *glissade* next time with the right. During the preliminary *temps levé*, the starting foot is drawn back with a *fouetté* or whipped action at right angles to the supporting foot.

Such, then, is the genuine polka step, a combination of five simple actions—the *temps levé*, *fouetté*, *glissade*, *pas coupé* and *jeté*. Danced thus, the polka is a spirited movement possessing the quality of exhilaration in a marked degree. The rhythm also is pleasing and natural, one into which the pupil falls almost instinctively when once the initial difficulty of the *temps levé* has been overcome. Centrifugal action and reciprocity of movement between the partners increases the pleasure of the dance, and the employment of graceful figures, such as were originally included, would add some æsthetic value. Anyhow, the polka, executed with the proper steps and correct action of the body, is a totally different thing from the miserable thud, thud of the ordinary ball-room dancer.

Seeing how essential it is, then, for those who would acquire even the *simplest dance correctly*, to learn the separate limb actions of which it is composed I will now describe a few of the steps

and movements most frequently employed in dancing.

But first I would strongly impress upon teachers of dancing the desirability of familiarizing their pupils with the proper technical names of the steps. Most of these are French, and as the French language is generally understood and spoken more or less by educated people in all countries it is well to adhere to their use. It may be necessary, however, to explain at the outset that in technical phraseology the word *pas* is frequently omitted and such terms as *jeté*, *coupé*, etc., are used as if they were substantives instead of participles.

Perhaps the simplest of all dancing steps is the *chassé*, so called because the feet in executing the movement—especially if it be continued in one direction—have the appearance of chasing one another. It is, as already hinted in treating of “gracefulness,” a step similar to that by which little children frequently express delight. To execute the movement continuously in a given direction the weight of the body should be sustained mainly by the foot that is first slid forward, sideways, or backward, as the case may be. It should fall only momentarily on the foot that follows or chases. The tendency amongst beginners to touch the ground with the heel in going forward must be carefully avoided. The continuity of the *chassé* step may be broken by the introduction of some other step or merely by a pause. When three actions only are made, with each foot leading alternately, as in the galop, two-step, etc., the movement is called a *chassé à trois pas*.



The *coupé* or cut step is one in which the supporting foot appears, as it were, to have been cut out of its place. Suppose you are standing on one limb, with the other raised in the *second position*. Bring the raised foot smartly down exactly to the place which the supporting one occupies, and as the raised foot descends project the supporting one to a corresponding position in the opposite direction. This movement is termed a *coupé lateral*. In the *coupé dessus* the raised foot is brought down smartly over the toe of and at right angles to the supporting foot which is simultaneously raised in a corresponding rearward direction; and in the *coupé dessous* the raised rearward foot is brought down quickly under the heel of and at right angles to the supporting foot, which is at the same instant raised in front.

As it is difficult for some English people to pronounce the words "dessus" and "dessous" so that they can be easily distinguished, it is in such cases better to say "*coupé over*" or "*coupé under*."

The above steps generally look more effective if made at angles of forty-five degrees to the audience than directly forward and backward. Great care should be taken that the toes be turned *well downward* during the execution of these movements. Briefly, the *coupé* is a step in which the feet pass from one open position, through a closed one, to another open position. Some of the older French writers, including Feuillet and P. Rameau, did not consider that a *coupé* necessarily involved a change of balance from one limb to the other.

The next important step to consider is the *pas*



*jeté* or thrown step, so called because in doing it the weight of the body is thrown, as it were, from one limb to the other. In order to perform any leaping movement there must be a preliminary flexion of the limb on which the spring is to be made. Three angles are formed, one at the juncture of the hip and thigh-bone, one at the knee joint, and another at the ankle. The sudden straightening of the limb by a vigorous tension of the extensor muscles, plus the upward impulse from the ground, gives the necessary impetus for the jump. As I have elsewhere pointed out, it is a physical impossibility to *jump* without previously bending the knees. We may, of course, rise on the toes, suddenly release the feet from the floor and again fall on them without any flexion of the knee joint. But although such a movement might to a non-scientific observer have the appearance of a little jump, it is really nothing of the kind. The body reaches its maximum elevation while the toe still presses on the floor, and what appears to be a jump is only a drop from a higher to a lower elevation.

In executing the *pas jeté*,<sup>1</sup> or, indeed, any movement of a leaping nature, it is necessary to remember that as the toe is the last part of the foot to leave the ground in rising so it must also be the first to reach it in falling; and on alighting the limb must also be flexed in order to avoid the concussion that would otherwise be felt. In a

<sup>1</sup> May be spelt *jetté* if preferred. It is spelt with two t's in Blasis' *Traité Élémentaire de l'Art de la Danse*, but with only one t in the English translation of his *Code of Terpsichore*. The French verb is *jeter*, to throw.

succession of *jetés*, as already hinted in the paragraphs on "Resilience," the descending limb should *remain* flexed in order to supply the requisite impetus, by extension, for the next leap, and should not be straightened till the finish of the movement.

The kind of *pas jeté* that is used in ball-room dancing is a very much modified form of the step. On the stage, and in ornamental dancing, the leaps from one foot to the other may be of considerable elevation. The term *jeté non rapproché* implies that the limbs are to remain open in executing the movement.

The term *glissade* or *pas glissé* is one that may be applied to almost any simple smooth step in dancing, even if the foot with which it is executed does not actually glide over the floor. A *glissade* may, for instance, be taken from a raised position, the foot only reaching the floor in finishing the movement. Strictly speaking, a *pas glissé entier* is taken from one open position to another open position. A *demi glissé* is taken from a closed to an open one, and *vice versa*.

There are several steps to which the term *pas de bourrée* has been applied. Some writers think that the term has reference to the verb *bourrer*, to stuff or wad, because the movements are of a soft, smooth nature; in fact, quite opposite to the various *coupés* which, as we have seen, are all of a staccato character.

The *bourrée d'auvergne* is an old French dance in which similar movements occur. The *pas de bourrée* now most frequently in use is that to which Rameau added the term *emboité* to distinguish it



from the *fleuret* and *pas de bourrée ouverte*. It is performed as follows: At the first count the right foot is advanced to the *fourth position*; at the second the left is brought up *softly* to the *third* or *fifth position* behind, receiving the weight of the body; and at the third count the right foot is again advanced, the balance resting thereon. If the music is in triple time, the left foot is immediately advanced to recommence the step; but if, as is more correct, in common time, a rise and fall is made on the supporting foot at the fourth count, while the raised one is extended and pointed gracefully outward as it passes in front.

This step was used by good dancers in the ball-room for the so-called "barn-dance." It is similar to the *ceum siubhaile* of the strathspey, only smoother, and it is frequently and legitimately employed in gavotte arrangements. When danced to minuet music without any rise or hop, ill-informed teachers of dancing actually speak of this step as a "*pas de menuet*," but it is *nothing of the kind*. It is only used *faute de mieux* by exponents who exhibit what they are pleased to call "the minuet," without knowing anything of the real dance or its unique steps.

There is also a *pas de bourrée* in triplets, as employed in the *gavotte de Vestris*. It is done as follows: Suppose the right foot raised in the *second position*. At the first count, bring it down behind the left to the *fifth position*; at the second, move the left to the *second position*; and at the third, close the right foot again behind the left. Then raise the left leg, and repeat the three movements in the opposite direction. The move-



ments should be done smoothly if quickly, generally three to two counts in actual practice—one and two—three and four ; but other methods of timing are permissible, according to the dance and music. The feet of the dancer may be crossed either before or behind, but the step loses all brilliance if the knees are not turned completely out.

The *pas de ciseaux* is a step in which the legs of the dancer move in a manner that has some resemblance to the opening and shutting of a pair of scissors. Hence the name. It is also known as the *pas de sissonne* from an ancient dance so called. There are several ways of executing the step, but the general principle underlying it is that the body rises from *both feet* and descends on *one foot only*. Perhaps the most usual form of the step is this. Having one leg raised in the *second position*, at the first count bring the raised limb down to the *fifth position*, either before or behind the supporting one, softly and in flexing both knees. Then, at the second count, spring lightly upward from both feet, descending only on the one that was first raised while the other is now raised and extended in the opposite *second position*.

The word *temps* or *tems*, as it is sometimes written, usually indicates a movement in which a change of balance from one limb to the other is not essential. Thus a *sissonne* in which the same limb was again raised as in the *leum-trasd* of the Scotch reel would more correctly be called a *temps de sissonne*.

One of the most useful steps employed in dancing of the ornamental kind is that known as the *pas*

*de basque*. It also happens to be a step with which few teachers are unacquainted, even among those whose technical knowledge is not very profound; although it must be admitted that it is often taught incorrectly as regards detail. The name is derived from the province of Basque in Southern France, where it probably had its origin. Similar steps, however, are employed in the national dances of many countries, and there are distinct French, Spanish and Polish forms of the *pas de basque*. The step is not a simple movement like the *jeté* or *coupé*, but is composed of three distinct actions of the feet in each of which there is a change of balance. There is a semi-circular movement to the side (*demi rond de jambe*), a *glissade en avant* and a closing movement which may be either a *bourrée* or *coupé dessous* according to whether the step is required to be of a smooth or sprightly character.

Supposing the music selected be in triple time, as in the Spanish form, the step may be executed thus: If you are resting on the left foot, -with the right describe a half circle, passing through the second position and approaching the fifth or third behind. In finishing this *rond* spring from the left to the right foot, then immediately slide the left forward, and a little obliquely across the right, to the *fourth position croisé*, and finish by bringing the right foot smoothly up to the *fifth position en arrière*, simultaneously raising the left ready to recommence the movement with the semi-circular action taken the opposite way.

In the French form of the *pas de basque*, such as was employed by G. Vestris in the solo figure



of his famous gavotte, the semi-circular action of the foot to the side is executed almost simultaneously with the *glissé croisé* like an appoggiatura in music. Thus you count *one* for the side spring and *glissé croisé*, and *two* for the closing movement, which in this case is more like a *coupé dessous*, the whole step being of a sprightlier nature than the Spanish *pas de basque*. In the Polish step the *glissade* is somewhat elongated, and less *croisé* than in the French dupal or gavotte form.

In describing these steps I have only as yet indicated the movements of the lower limbs, but the arms also should be harmoniously employed. In performing simple steps like the *jeté*, *coupé*, etc., they may be extended evenly in the *second position*, while in the *coupés dessus* and *dessous* the arm *opposite* the extended foot may be raised in the *fourth* or *fifth position* and the other rounded in front of the body. In the *pas de basque* the arm opposite the foot that makes the *glissade* should be raised higher, while the other may be extended in the *second*, or held in a rounded position in front of but *well away from* the body, their relative position being changed at each step.

The successful performance of a *pirouette* in which several consecutive revolutions of the body are made while supported only on the toes of one foot, with changes of attitude in turning, and finishing in some graceful posture with perfect *aplomb*, requires not only an immense amount of practice but also exceptional ability. Such an achievement is hardly to be expected on the part of a non-professional dancer, however skilful in

ordinary movements; but a simple *pirouette* consisting of one, two, or even three complete turns does not present any great difficulty. It is only requisite that the pupil should have already attained some facility in adjusting the centre of gravity, as explained in the preceding exercises, so that the balance is maintained to the finish of the movement.

The simplest method of making one complete turn—which, although often so called, is not, strictly speaking, a *pirouette*—is as follows: Assuming that you wish to turn to the right, let the left foot be extended in the *second position*. The head and arms should initiate the movement, the latter waving from left to right to impart the necessary impulse. When this is obtained, rise on the toes of the right foot and, with the balance well sustained on the right leg, swing yourself round. Let the left leg cross before the right as you turn, and when you face the opposite way, the left toe may touch the floor to give, as it were, fresh impetus to the movement. Continue turning till you are again facing the direction as at starting. You may turn two or three times on the right toe before putting the left to the ground, but must always finish with your feet in a correct position, your balance secure, and your arms and body gracefully disposed.

There are many other ways of making *pirouettes*, such, for instance, as drawing up one limb until the sole of the foot is parallel with the supporting leg, rising on the toe, and turning rapidly in the direction of the raised limb, or *en dedans*. The *pirouette* may finish in an open position by gently



dropping the raised foot, or in some graceful arabesque posture.

When a straight upward leap is made from one of the closed positions, and without separating the limbs, their relative position is changed during the interval of suspension, so that in descending the one that was in front is now behind, the movement is termed a *changement de pied*. When, however, the limbs are crossed and recrossed several times—for which naturally a far more powerful spring is required and great celerity of action—the movement is termed an *entrechat*, from the Italian word *intralciare*, meaning to interweave.

The simplest way to begin practising this movement, on which I have already made some observations under “Resilience,” is to stand in a closed position, bend the knees, spring upward, change the relative position of the limbs, beating them together, and descend in an open position. In practising this you are not likely to hurt your feet, but afterwards you must try jumping from an open position, crossing and recrossing the limbs and falling with the feet in a closed position. In doing this you must at first be careful not to tread on your toes or hurt the ankles. Remember, however, that the smallest number of beatings of which an *entrechat* is composed is four; that is, crossing, and again crossing and recrossing during the leap. This forms the comparatively easy *entrechat à quatre*. Of course *entrechats* in which six or more beatings are introduced require considerable agility and practice. As I have already pointed out, the limbs should be fully

stretched as the body rises, or the beatings cannot be satisfactorily made.<sup>1</sup>

When a leap is made from one foot and the other foot, raised in an open position, is struck by it and remains extended while the body descends again upon the same foot, the action is called a *capriole* or caper, from the Italian *capri*, a goat. If the limbs instead of merely striking together cross and recross in a high side position before descending on one foot, this movement has a very brilliant effect.

To execute the *ailles de pigeon*, which is a somewhat difficult movement, stand on one leg, having the other raised in, say, the intermediate rearward position. Bend the limb on which you are resting, say, the right, in preparation for a vigorous leap. As you rise strike the calf of the right leg with the calf of the left leg, crossing and recrossing the limbs while leaping, and alight upon the left foot with the right leg raised in a corresponding opposite position to that in which you started. The step can now be repeated by reversing the action of the limbs.

In the foregoing pages I have sometimes used the word "attitude" and sometimes the more technical term "arabesque" when referring to certain harmonious co-ordinations of the body and limbs. There are some exponents who say that the terms should be distinctively applied, and maintain that an *arabesque* is essentially different from an attitude. As a matter of fact, although it may not be technically correct to

<sup>1</sup> "L'entrechat se prend sur place, par un assemblé, par un coupé ou par un jetté."—*Traité de l'Art de la Danse*, Milan, 1820.



describe every attitude as an *arabesque*, it certainly is quite good English to speak of the positions assumed by dancers in the groupings called *arabesques* as "attitudes." This is according to ordinary usage and accepted definitions. Otherwise we should be at some difficulty to express the idea in our mother tongue. The posture *technically* known as "attitude" in dancing is based upon a graceful co-ordination of the various members as exemplified in Bologna's statue "The Flying Mercury." Some of my readers may have seen the beautiful original of this justly admired work in the National Museum at Florence; but all must be familiar with the small bronze copies, of varying merit, that are usually sold as mantel ornaments. The positions of the limbs are somewhat altered in the conventional Terpsichorean "attitude." The knee is raised higher and the limb turned more outward, while the hand that holds the caduceus in the statue is left free, and the arm differently placed. All the same, however, the similarity of the postures is at once apparent.

The term *arabesque*, as employed in the arts of painting and architecture, suggests the kind of ornamentation composed of wreaths, flowers, plants, musical instruments, etc., with which panels, friezes, entablatures and pediments are frequently adorned. There are many examples of such designs in Owen Jones's *Grammar of Ornament*. But Carlo Blasis, who claims to have been the first to give a precise meaning to the term in connection with dancing, says: "Our dancing masters have also introduced this term into their art, as expressive of the picturesque groups which they have formed of



VII. SIMPLE ARABESQUE.





male and female dancers, interlaced in a thousand different manners, one with another, by means of garlands, crowns, hoops entwined with flowers, and sometimes pastoral instruments which they hold in their hands. These *attitudes* (italics are mine), so diversified and enchanting, remind us of the beautiful Bacchantes that we see on antique basso relievos, and by their aerial lightness, their variety, their liveliness, and the numberless contrasts they successively present, have in a manner rendered the word *arabesque* natural and proper to the art of dancing."

Here, then, we have the words attitude and *arabesque* indiscriminately employed in the same paragraph to express the same idea; and there are instances in which both words are used to describe the same figures in the well-known illustrations to the *Code of Terpsichore*.

The distinction might be very briefly summed up thus:

"Attitude," in the strictly technical sense, is a graceful position in which the body of the dancer is balanced on the toes of one stretched limb, while the opposite arm is raised high above the head, and the other limbs harmoniously disposed.

"Arabesque attitudes" are such as might appropriately be employed in those figure groupings to which the term *arabesques* has been applied. In these the body may rest either on one or both feet.

There are, of course, other steps and movements to be learnt, but those already explained are sufficient, if properly combined, to form dances in almost endless variety. From the daily



practice of these steps and movements, especially those of a leaping nature, you will derive much physical benefit. That is why I have been at some pains to describe them. If there should be any tendency to heart weakness, it is obviously better to practice only quiet *terre à terre* dance-steps, such as cause the least exertion; but assuming that lungs and heart are in sound condition, I would strongly recommend the more exhilarating and vigorous, as well as the milder movements, especially for those who wish to increase their strength.

## CHAPTER X

### NATIONAL DANCES

Hornpipe, Strathspey, Jig, Gopak, Furlane, Tarantella,  
Mazurka, etc.

ALL people should have some knowledge of the national dance or dances of their own country, assuming, of course, that it possesses a distinctive national dance.<sup>1</sup> Handel declared that the hornpipe and the morris-dance were the only genuine English dances. This may be true; but we, as Britons, can also claim the jig, the sword-dance, the strathspey and the reel.

As regards the hornpipe of England, and the sword-dance of Scotland, I doubt if there are any finer national solo dances in the world. What country has dances so vigorous, so manly, so pure? Of the three chief elements by which dances are inspired, the religious, the martial, and the sexual, the last named at least has no part whatever in either of these noble dances. How different are they from the dances of Spain or even Italy, which are always more or less associated with the idea of sex! Indeed, a Spanish dance from which the amorous element was entirely eliminated would be like a nut without the kernel, an egg without the yolk.

<sup>1</sup> Belgium has none.



The ancient Greeks had also their virile dances. They had their sword-dance, their martial pyrrhic dance, of which Byron sings in his "Isles of Greece," and their nautical dance or hornpipe which they called *monocheros*. The constant practice of such dances made them agile, alert, and strong.

Our English hornpipe is, perhaps, the most eminently characteristic of modern national dances. Its symbolism must be apparent even to the most casual observer. It belongs also to the higher order of dances because, when properly executed, it is in a sense dramatic. Each step and action of the body conveys, or should convey, some definite meaning. Although I have in another work pointed out some of the chief characteristics of the hornpipe, I will again venture to call attention to them.

Take first the initial position of the arms. Note the spirit of conscious power expressed thereby. They are folded, but never lowered. Being raised, their position is by no means indicative of laziness, but rather of readiness for action. Meanwhile the lower limbs are vigorously employed. They are executing the most complicated and rapid movements, while the upper part of the body is in a state of repose. Mark the significance of this. Is it not admirably typical of the British tendency to maintain a calm demeanour amid distracting circumstances? The stamp of the foot which terminates the *double shuffle* and other movements suggests a spirit of defiance. Then consider how the action of the waves, the rocking motion of the ship is indicated by the step in

which the body sinks and rises upon the toes of the crossed feet, first on one side, then on the other.

But the arms do not long remain inactive. They also are vigorously employed so soon as ever there is a demand for their activity. The dancer hitches up his trousers in the true nautical manner, fore and aft, as he careers around the stage or room. He mimics the hauling of the ropes, the winding of the windlass, and the rowing away to shore. Everything about the dance is redolent of the salt sea. I repeat that among the national dances of the modern world the hornpipe stands alone. It is a manly, a moral, a noble dance, one of which we, as Britons, may indeed be proud. It is the duty of all British sailors to learn to dance—in fact, the accomplishment was recommended to a young naval officer by Nelson<sup>1</sup>—and the hornpipe should be properly taught in every British school.

Unfortunately, however, the hornpipe when it is taught is by no means always taught correctly. I do not mean as regards the track of the dancer, or order of the steps and figure. These may to some extent vary according to the skill of the dancer, the space at his disposal, and the circumstances in which he performs. I refer more particularly to the spirit that should animate the movements. I have sometimes seen the ropes hauled downward in a manner more suggestive

<sup>1</sup> "You will see almost the necessity of it when employed in foreign countries; indeed, the honour of the nation is so often entrusted to sea-officers that there is no accomplishment that will not shine with peculiar lustre in them."—Nelson's letter to young officer, quoted in *Daily Telegraph*, January 19, 1915.



of "the sexton ringing the village bell" than of the sprightliness of Jack Tar. Again, as regards the pulling to shore, although it may be admitted that on a rough sea the practice known as "feathering" cannot be satisfactorily accomplished, there is no reason why a dancer should imitate the action of rowing in such a manner that if he were actually so engaged he would inevitably "catch a crab" at every stroke of the oar.

Full justice cannot be done to the hornpipe unless the whole performance is instinct with genuine feeling. Each movement must be executed as if it were really the action which it typifies. The rope must be pulled down straight, hand over hand, as a rope is actually pulled, and it must be done in perfect accord with the music, and also with the somewhat intricate step that accompanies the action. If the rope is hauled in horizontally, the requisite amount of effort should apparently be exerted. Each stroke in the rowing movement must be made, not daintily, as if the implement held were a fan or fairy wand, but in a firm seamanlike manner, with the hands close together, as if they really grasped an oar which really met the resistance of the water. Meanwhile, the more rapid steps must display the greatest brilliance, and the rollicking, nautical spirit of the dance must be sustained throughout.

The Scottish sword-dance frequently performed to the primitive tune known as "Gillie Callum" is a dance of distinctly martial character. Of its extreme antiquity there can be no doubt. I have seen it stated that originally the wild Highlanders danced barefooted between the crossed swords,



which were placed edge upward on the ground. If this be true, it must have proved a somewhat risky performance, one that demanded great skill and not a little courage on the part of the dancer.

The peculiar and characteristic step performed at the hilts and points of the swords in the first round, the step which indeed forms the basis of the dance, is similar to the setting step of the eightsome reel. It is usually described *faute de mieux* as a *pas de basque*, but of course that is not the right term to employ, as the correct step bears little if any resemblance to the *pas de basque*, and has no progressive movement. It should be executed thus :

While standing on the left leg the right foot makes a little *ballonné* (as if it were passing over a ball) round to a very close *second position*, taking the weight of the body. The left toe is then brought to the *fifth position* in front, the body *momentarily* rises thereon, *without transfer of balance*, and falls again on the sole of the right foot. These three movements are made while counting one *and* two, the step being repeated the opposite way, and with opposite feet for three *and* four. I should point out, however, that if "Gillie Callum" is played, the rhythm will be one, two *and* three, four *and*, etc.

The turning step between the sword points is simply a miniature waltz *sur place*, done neatly on the toes, and of course without any gliding action. Although the waltz as a circular dance for couples is comparatively modern, we may be sure that the actual step is one of very remote origin. I have no doubt myself that it was known

in classic times. For instance, the words "*Ter pede terram,*" in Horace, clearly indicate the waltz-like rhythm of a dance in the days of Augustus Cæsar.<sup>1</sup>

It greatly facilitates the acquirement of difficult or intricate steps like some of those used in the hornpipe and Highland dancing if the pupil is perfectly assured as to which foot the weight of the body should be resting on at any given juncture. The reason for this is obvious. It costs an effort to move the foot on which the body rests. To do so a decided spring is necessary, and as we naturally incline to do what comes easiest, and provided the balance is sustained on the proper foot, our inclination will be to move the one which the nature of the step requires us to move.

As regards Scottish social dancing, perhaps one of the first things that strikes a Southern spectator in a Highland ball-room is the apparent earnestness with which the average Scotsman "takes the floor." It is at once evident that those assembled are out to dance. That is their *bona fide* occupation for the time being. Dancing is the main object of the entertainment, while flirting, if indulged in at all, is quite a secondary consideration. The dancers may not all be proficient in their art, but at least they can claim to be doing their best. Even if the particular dance that is being played happens to be a waltz or two step, they do not, like some of the more languid Londoners, wait until the music is half finished before they rise to join the circling throng. No; almost directly the band starts they are up and at it with true Highland vigour.

<sup>1</sup> Ode 18, lib. III.



It may be that Caledonia's atrocious climate has something to do with her children's ardour for the dance. Doubtless the hardihood of the race enables them to foot it unintermittently through the long hours in a manner that would utterly exhaust a less vigorous assemblage of southern dancers.

To watch a genuine reel executed by expert dancers to the music of the pipes is a sheer delight. Some years since I was fortunate enough to witness a Highland village ball. My first impression, however, was one of keenest disappointment. Among the preliminary items on the programme were a waltz, a barn-dance, and a set of lancers. The room was spacious, but the floor was bad; the waltzing was indifferent, and, worst of all, a few of the later vulgarities of both the East and West Ends of London had actually penetrated even to that remote region.

Then, suddenly, as if at the stroke of some enchanter's wand, the whole scene changed. Two or three pipers entered the room, and the dancers formed sets for the eightsome reel. Immediately the surroundings became invested with the glamour of traditional romance. The pipers at once struck up their wild, barbaric music (I mean this in no disparaging sense), the dancers joined hands, circled round, and executed the beautiful introduction to the dance, with its characteristic *moulinet*. Then they went through the reel of eight proper, each dancer as "fairy" or "de'il" executing his or her *pas seul* while the rest joined hands and circled round; this, of course, alternated with setting to partners and opposite



dancers, the turning with arms, and true figure eight.

I can only say that, by contrast with the kind of dancing that had gone before, the effect of this reel, with its continuous, ever-winding movement, was *sublime*. The word is by no means inappropriate, because the scene recalled a passage in De Quincey's autobiographic sketches in which he speaks of "the interminable revolution of ages hurrying after ages, and one generation treading upon the flying footsteps of another."

Of course one may see an "ightsome" danced in the ordinary way without emotion; but here, in a vast room, was the whole company simultaneously executing one of their most beautiful national dances. They were the same men and the same girls who had cut so poor a figure in their previous efforts. Yet immediately they became inspired with the spirit of their traditional music and their traditional dance every vestige of vulgarity vanished from their style, they bore themselves with manly dignity and maidenly grace, while their movements evinced a latent energy not unworthy the descendants of Bruce and Wallace.

Ah, what a fine thing is genuine dancing! What a welcome change would the vigorous ightsome and foursome reels make if occasionally introduced among our more effeminate movements! How greatly they would enhance the beauty of ball-room dancing from a spectacular point of view! How much we should benefit physically by the practice of the necessary steps, with their proper accompanying arm movements, bringing as

they do so many muscles into vigorous accordant action !

Some of the steps employed in national dances are distinctive and essentially characteristic, while others are more or less common to the dances of all countries. For instance, the more simple actions, based, as I have already pointed out, on our natural methods of locomotion, such as the *glissade*, the *jeté*, the *chassé*, etc., are general, and may be seen everywhere ; but movements like the *aiseag-trasd* of the Highland fling, the "sitting" step of the gopak, the *mouvement des hanches* of certain Spanish dances, and the *pas boiteux* of the mazurka are distinctive and characteristic, as are also such combination steps as the *pas polonais*, the Slavonic *pas tortillé*, etc.

The setting or "footing" step in which the dancer hops on one foot while lightly pointing and withdrawing from the floor the toes of the other turned well downward is employed in the Irish jig, the English morris, the Italian tarantella, the Venetian fourlane, and many other dances. I once saw in the vicinity of Naples a tarantella which in many respects resembled an Irish jig. It was danced by a native boy and girl. The peasant dance of Friuli, known as the fourlane or "forlana," has also much in common with both the jig and the tarantella. The reason is not far to seek. The music of a dance suggests the nature of the movement. A step that suits a jig tune will also suit the air of a tarantella, or of the fourlane, which was originally danced to the music of the Venetian barcarolle.

Many years since, when staying in Venice, I



saw the fourlane danced by some gondoliers and girls. I need hardly say that the genuine old dance was very different from the kind of thing which certain exponents attempted to exploit as a "ball-room version of the forlana" under the pretended recommendation of the Pope, and evidently without the slightest knowledge of the original dance. I have even seen a feeble bowdlerized maxixe bresilienne represented on an American film as "the forlana," while, as a matter of fact, no two dances could be more diametrically opposite.

The real Venetian fourlane is an old dance formerly practised by the peasants of Friuli, and, according to Carlo Blasis, "well known in Venice and much in vogue among the gondoliers." It represents a kind of love scene, and to me it appears to symbolize the spirit of coquetry. A Venetian girl may not, according to a recognized custom, actually refuse to dance with a man who requests the honour in a polite manner; but she may tease and endeavour to elude him. Thus, in the dance, after apparently yielding, the girl contrives to escape from and is pursued by her partner, who dances round her and tries, as it were, to win favour by the grace and dexterity of his movements. At length he catches and turns her under his arm, grasping her by the waist. After a few turns, however, she again escapes, and he once more pursues and overtakes her. Then comes the final surrender of the fair one, and a giddy whirling movement to finish the dance.

When I saw the fourlane in Venice, I noticed that although the general character of the dance was maintained, the dancers seemed to improvise



the order of the steps which, as Blasis also remarks, resemble those of the tarantella. For purposes of exhibition, however, the steps and their order should be definitely fixed, and the track of the pursuit previously arranged. It may take the form of a double ellipse, or an hour-glass, with a circular step of the man around the girl previous to the turn or *allemande* and surrender. This may also be supplemented by an arabesque grouping of the couples immediately before the waltz-like arm to waist movement.

Steps in which the toe and heel of the dancer touch the ground alternately, as in the jig and hornpipe, are common to many countries, as are also twisted heel and toe steps (*pas tortillé*) which figure in Irish, Spanish, Hungarian and other dances. It should, however, be remembered, as already shown in treating of the *pas de basque*, that there is generally a distinctive character and method of employment in the steps and movements that proclaims the nationality of the dancer.

Not very long since I witnessed a performance of so-called national dances by a professional lady who styled herself a "quick change artist." There is no need to mention her name. It was, at that time, fairly well known, and I will readily admit that she was a clever and brilliant executant of certain steps which evidently constituted her stock in trade, so to speak. Her changes of dress were marvellously rapid, and her costumes so characteristic that there was no possibility of mistaking the country to which each belonged. There were British, French, Spanish, Russian, Italian

and other *costumes* ; but, unfortunately, there was no distinctive character at all about the figures, steps, or movements. *It was the costume alone that proclaimed the country to which the dances were supposed to belong.* As a matter of fact they were all so much alike that it would have been of little importance if the lady had put on the wrong dress for any particular dance.

It is, I fear, by no means unusual in exhibitions of dancing, whether professional or amateur, for the supposed character of the dance to be indicated by the costume of the dancer rather than by the steps. Anyway, however regrettable the fact, it certainly is so with regard to the dances of bygone times, about which I shall presently have something to say.

As regards the national Russian dancing—not the dancing of the ballet which, as pointed out elsewhere, is based on the Italian school—one of the most characteristic movements introduced in the gopak, or rural dance, is that in which the male dancer sinks into a sitting posture as he balances his body on the toes of one foot while stretching the other out straight in front of him. He then quickly doubles up the limb that was outstretched, changes his balance to that limb, and simultaneously extends the foot on which he first supported himself. Sometimes the limbs are stretched out straight in front of the dancer, and rapid forward progression is made as the limbs are alternately doubled up and extended. Sometimes, on the other hand, the dancers rapidly extend each limb by turn, while the body remains almost stationary ; and sometimes the dancers



bring their limbs round with a peculiar curved action that renders the movement more grotesque.

This step is not so difficult as it appears to be, but the practice thereof is apt to make one's limbs ache at the outset, especially if unaccustomed to flexional exercises. The main thing in practising is to remember to lean well over to the side of that limb *which is about to take the weight of the body*, so that at the moment of impact the centre of gravity will fall within the base of the supporting foot. Another point is always to lean well forward during the movement; indeed, if any learner neglects to observe these simple instructions, he will, to borrow a nautical expression, quickly find himself on his beam ends.

In practising the rapid pirouette on one toe so frequently employed in Slavonic dances, the learner must be careful to finish the turn in a good position with the balance well sustained on both feet. This also applies to the *tour en air*, or turn in jumping, and, clearly, if the dancer falls with the feet turned out, the base on which he rests, being broader, will allow a better chance of retaining the balance.

The *pas glissé* of the mazurka is performed by sliding forward on one foot to the *fourth position*, which occupies two beats of the music, and at the third beat the other foot is raised in the fourth rearward position, while a slight spring is made on the foot that has been slid forward. The movement is repeated, beginning with the opposite foot. It is known as the *pas de mazurka*, because it is the step most frequently employed, either separately or in combination with other steps,



The Polish *pas de basque* I have already explained. The *pas boiteux* is so called because those who dance it badly have the appearance of limping. In this the dancer slides forward with one foot, as in the *pas de mazurka*, the slide occupying two counts, while at the third count the other foot is brought down smartly, the heel striking the ground. The foot that was slid is at the same instant raised, the heel being placed close against the calf of the supporting limb. This step may also be made sideways. The *pas polonais* is composed of a *glissade*, a closing movement and a *coup de talon* in which the heels are struck together during the interval of suspension. The step may also be made without the *coup de talon*, the sliding foot being again extended, this time raised, while a slight spring or hop is made on the supporting limb.





VIII. "RÉVÉRENCE" (ONLY AT BEGINNING AND FINISH OF OLD COURT DANCES).



## CHAPTER XI

### COURT DANCES OF THE OLDEN TIME AS THEY WERE REALLY DANCED

Pavane, Gaillarde, Coranto, Volta, etc.

IN Mediæval times, previous to the Renaissance, dancing as a cultivated art was almost entirely neglected. But it seems always to have been practised as a rural pastime by the people. It is included among the amusements which we are told were continued for three weeks after the marriage of Edward III to Philippa, and, according to legend, Joan Countess of Salisbury was the king's partner at a ball when the incident occurred which is always connected with the motto :

*"Honi soit qui mal y pense."*

It is probable that the morris or morrice dance, which is indisputably of Moorish origin, was introduced during the reign of Edward III when John of Gaunt returned from Spain. Some maintain, however, that it was introduced by Eleanor of Castile, who was a daughter of Henry II. It is stated that the morris dancers in this country used at first to perform with their faces blackened to represent Moors, and were the prototypes of our modern nigger minstrels. But

the oriental character of the original *danse des moresques* soon disappeared. The dance was modified to accord with English traditions, and though the morisco with his bells was retained, the dancers most in evidence were representatives of Robin Hood, Friar Tuck and Maid Marian, who was generally personated by a boy dressed as a girl. These characters were accompanied by a musician, a dysard or buffoon, and a hobbyhorse of wickerwork with a pasteboard head and neck.

In the parish church of Kingston-on-Thames there is an entry in the churchwardens' books for the year 1537-8 that for the use of morris dancers at Whitsuntide they kept "a fryer's cote of russet, and a kyrtele weltyd with red cloth, a mowren's cote of buckram, and foure morres-daunsars' cotes of white fustian, spangelid, and too gryne saten cotes, and disardde's cote and belles."<sup>1</sup> The morris or morrice dance, however, eventually lost all traces of its original form and became involved with purely English rustic or country dances to which the exotic term "morris" should not properly be applied, since few of them contain even a vestige of the moresque character. Our country dances are for the most part indigenous and purely representative of our land and traditions.

A praiseworthy effort has been made to revive some of the old English country dances by the English Folk Dance Society, under the direction of Mr. Cecil J. Sharp. The original descriptions of these dances are readily available in Playford's *Dancing Master*; but they are not always

<sup>1</sup> Tyson's *Environs of London*.



strikingly lucid or even grammatical. Thus in the directions for dancing "All in a Garden Green," we read: "First man shake his own wo: by the hand, then the 2, then the 3 by one hand then by the other, kisse her twice, turn her. Shake her by the hand, then the 2, then your own by one hand, then by the other, kisse her twice and turn her." You will observe that the personal pronouns are a little mixed—sometimes third and sometimes second person being employed; but the cordial nature of the dance is evident; there is an entire absence of all conventional restraint, and if this is one of the country dances which the above mentioned society introduce in their exhibitions, it may be assumed that the performers have, in American phraseology, "a real good time."

The couples in the old English country dances did not always form in parallel lines. For instance, "Dargason" was danced all in a single line, "Up Tails All" was a dance in the form of a round, and "Dull Sir John" was a square for eight dancers placed as in a quadrille. Adson's "saraband" was not in the least like the traditional Spanish saraband, nor did Lane's "minuet" at all resemble the noble minuet of the French court. These were simply country dances in two lines. "The Maid's Morris" was also quite different from the genuine morris-dance of an earlier date. "Sweet Kate" was a dance in which directions are given to "Clap your woman on her right hand, then on the left, wind your hands and hold up your finger, etc."

It will be seen that these rustic dances were



for the most part genial rather than artistic; they appealed more strongly to the physical capacity for enjoyment than to the æsthetic perceptions of the dancers. But all the same, some of those which fulfilled De Quincey's ideal characteristics of a dance, viz. "free, fluent, and *continuous* motion," especially in the "hey," when well danced, were doubtless delightful to behold.

In the fifteenth century there was a great revival in dancing, and during the next two hundred years as a social art it may be said to have reached its highest development. It was during the reign of Elizabeth in England—the great days of art and literature—and from the time of Henri Quatre to that of Louis Quinze in France that the golden age of dancing was perhaps realized. Even the ball-room dances of those days demanded special training, and it would, perhaps, be difficult now to find men, if not girls also, with the facility of movement requisite for their successful performance. The facility of which I speak is not to be acquired by the practice of gymnastics only, and certainly not by practising some of the decadent wriggling movements that recently disgraced our ball-rooms. It can be acquired in no other way than by diligently practising those beautiful exercises and movements that belong to the genuine art of dancing, some of which I have already attempted to describe. Rameau, writing in 1725, tells how Louis XIV, notwithstanding his numerous regal duties, spared time to take regular dancing lessons from the celebrated Beauchamp for upwards of twenty years. No doubt you will think that this king after so much instruction ought to have

become a fairly good dancer. Well, he is credited with having been the finest dancer at his own court, a court where indifferent dancing was never tolerated.<sup>1</sup>

There is an old Chinese proverb to the effect that one may judge a monarch by the state of dancing during his reign, and although at first sight the maxim may seem a little far-fetched, there is doubtless something in it.

For instance, we know the salutary kind of dancing that was practised by the people in ancient Sparta under the direction of their great law-giver Lycurgus, and we read how—

The wise Thessalians ever gave  
The name of Leader of their country's dance  
To him that had their country's governance.

The ancient dances of China were sometimes named after rulers or dynasties like the *Ou-Ouang*, and were for the most part of a symbolic or a warlike nature. The most characteristic court dance of Queen Elizabeth's time was the *gaillarde*, an extremely *vigorous* movement of which the Queen herself—

Our glorious English Court's divine Image  
As it should be in this our Golden Age—

was a skilful exponent. Indeed, she is said to have practised the dance even to her sixty-ninth year. Now, whatever opinion may be held as to the moral character of Elizabeth—and there are some who would compare her with Catherine II

<sup>1</sup> “*Le siècle de Louis XIV fut pour la Danse ce qu'il fut pour tous les arts en général leur âge d'or.*”—*Traité de la Danse*. Desrat.



of Russia, or Isabella of Naples—there is no denying the fact that she was a very great sovereign, and, moreover, a woman of extraordinary *vigour*, both physical and mental. In the reign of Henri Quatre, the dignified pavane, and the lively, vigorous gaillarde still held sway in France; while in the days of the *Grand Monarque*, whose maxim was “*L'état ce'est moi*,” the chivalrous court minuet was most in vogue. But what were the dances most favoured by our Charles II? Well, if we may trust Samuel Pepys, they were the cushion dance and “Cuckolds All Awry,” which latter, on the occasion when Pepys went to Whitehall with Mr. Povey, the king himself led, calling for it as “the old dance of England.”

Now do not these facts seem rather to substantiate the Chinese proverb?

It would not, however, be fair to push the suggestion that the ruler of a nation is responsible for its social dancing to more recent days, at least not in our own country beyond the earlier portion of Queen Victoria's reign. In the olden time it was the Court that led the fashion in dancing, but for many decades people appear to have taken their inspiration from quite the opposite source, and have accepted as models a very different portion of the community. It is pretty evident that had the wishes and tastes of the Court been respected, there would have been no “tango and corset parading,” and none of the vulgar “rag dancing” that disgraced our ball-rooms before and even after the great war.

But returning to the court dances practised in the “spacious days of great Elizabeth,” let us





X. ANOTHER FIGURE OF THE GAILLARDE.



consider what kind of dances they actually were. Take a contemporary work *The Orchestra*, by Sir John Davies, first printed in 1596, but written somewhat earlier. A few verses were afterwards added by the author, one being as follows :

For of her Barons brave, and Ladies fair  
 (Who had they been elsewhere, most fair had been),  
 Many an incomparably lovely pair  
 With hand in hand were interlinked seen,  
 Making fair honours to their sovereign Queen ;  
     Forward they paced, and did their pace apply  
     To a most sweet and solemn melody.

You will note the extremely artful compliment to Elizabeth suggested in the bracketed line. As for the dance itself, there can, I think, be no doubt that reference is here made to the pavane.

Now take this stanza from the body of the poem :

A gallant Dance ! that lively doth bewray  
 A spirit and a virtue masculine ;  
 Impatient that her house on earth should stay  
 Since she herself is fiery and divine.  
 Oft doth she make her body upward flyne  
     With lofty turns and caprioles in the air,  
     Which with the lusty tunes accordeth fair.

This unquestionably refers to the lively gaillarde, and I wish you particularly to mark the second, fifth and sixth lines to which I shall again draw attention.

The following stanza describes the characteristics of a dance called the courante or coranto, which is said also to have been the dance that the notorious but gallant highwayman Claude Duval compelled

the lady to perform with him upon the heath in the later days of Charles II :

What shall I name these current traverses  
That on a triple dactyl foot do run  
Close by the ground, with sliding passages  
Wherein that dancer greatest praise hath won  
Which † with best order can all order shun ;  
For everywhere he wantonly must range,  
And turn, and wind, with unexpected change.

One more quotation from Sir John Davies and we will put his *Orchestra* back on the shelf.

Yet is there one the most delightful kind,  
A lofty jumping or a leaping round,  
When arm in arm two dancers are entwined  
And whirl themselves, with strict embracements bound.  
And still their feet an anapest do sound !  
An anapest is all their music's song  
Whose first two feet are short, and third is long.

These lines, perhaps the most accurately descriptive in the poem, refer, of course, to the volta, the prototype of our modern waltz.

I have quoted the above poem at some length because it was written by a man who lived in the days when these dances were actually in vogue. Sir John Davies was born in or about 1570 and died in 1626. He was a distinguished lawyer, a member of the House of Commons, and became specially prominent during the latter days of Elizabeth's reign. In consequence of his social position, he had ample opportunity for observing the style of dancing that prevailed at Elizabeth's court.

Please note, therefore, the main characteristics which he ascribes to the four dances mentioned.

† As in the original.



The first accorded with a melody "sweet and solemn"; the second was "lively" and "bewrayed"—that is, disclosed—a "virtue masculine," or, in other words, was virile and vigorous. It was also a dance of high turns and *tems en air*. The third was, on the contrary, a "sliding" *terre à terre* movement, but swift and evidently intricate as regards the dancers' track; while the fourth was a "lofty jumping" and a "whirling" dance, to which the adjective "delightful" is applied in the superlative degree.

How different is the actual picture here presented from the common but altogether fallacious ideas that obtain with respect to these old-time dances. There is a widespread but quite erroneous impression that they were all of a more or less stately character, that they were all arranged on much the same pattern, and that throughout their performance the couples were *constantly bowing and curtseying to one another*.

Thus, on the stage or at any ordinary exhibition, no matter what the dance may be called, whether "pavane," gavotte," or even "minuet"—it is all the same—this is the kind of thing that generally does duty for the dance:

First the couple or couples come on and make a *profound bow and curtsey*. So far so good. Many of the ancient dances, especially those of foreign origin, did *begin* with what was termed a *révérence*. But mark what follows. They give right hands, raise and lower their arms, walk three steps round to the right and make *another deep bow and curtsey*. Then they raise and lower their left hands, walk round three steps to the



left, and *again they make a deep bow and curtsey*. But that is not all. They walk a few steps forward, turn to face one another, and *once more bow and curtsey*. Then they cross over to opposite places with a *bow and curtsey*, return with *another bow and curtsey*, take a few steps backward, again *making a deep bow and curtsey*—and so on *ad nauseam* at every cadence or half cadence to the end of the dance!

What could be more absurd? What more inane?

Of course this kind of thing was never really done in olden times, but unfortunately there is no art concerning which people are generally less enlightened at the present day than the art of dancing. Clearly, if they had any knowledge of its traditional or historic aspects, they could never tolerate exhibitions so supremely ridiculous in themselves, and so utterly unlike what they are supposed to represent.

Perhaps, though, you may think I exaggerate as regards the number of curtseys. But this will scarcely be the opinion of anyone who has witnessed these absurd productions. I have by me a little book which in pretending to describe the "*menuet de la cour*" gives directions for performing *no fewer than sixteen bows and curtseys* during the dance. Fancy that! Again, let me quote a *single figure* from the description of a dance *supposed to be the pavane* in Miss Nellie Chaplin's *Court Dances and Others*. The dance is for two girls, and Fig. III begins thus: "*Both dance pas glissez (sic) to left with deep curtsey, again to right with deep curtsey. Pas glissez and*

*curtsey* to right, etc.," and this, mind, in the middle of the dance.

I must in fairness to Miss Chaplin say that she disclaims responsibility for the descriptions of either the pavane or the gaillarde, which latter is an arrangement for three girls, and about as *utterly unlike* the real ancient dance as it could possibly be. It is a pity that these dances are included in a work like Miss Chaplins', because although containing no original matter, the descriptions of old country dances, taken *verbatim et literatim* from Playford, are at least correct, and the music is very clearly reproduced. The title should have been reversed thus: "Country Dances and Others," for it is only the country dances that are of any value, while the so-called "court dances" actually mislead the inquirer. Signor Coppi was used to arranging dances of his own, and evidently it gave him less trouble to *invent* these than to find out how the old-time court dances were *really danced*.

The notion that there was a lot of bowing and curtseying in ancient court dances is, as I have already said, entirely fallacious. From the ancient basse dance, which was in vogue till 1538, right down to the comparatively modern "*Menuet de la Reine*" arranged by Gardel for the marriage of Louis Seize to Marie Antoinette, there have never been more than two salutations in any genuine old-time dance—one to begin, and sometimes one to finish, either double or single. Bows and curtseys were never repeated during the performance of the dances.

Whence, then, sprang the false idea? Well, it



may be the outcome of pure ignorance, sheer laziness, or poverty of invention; perhaps a little of all three.

If those who profess to arrange these dances for the stage don't know what really *was* done, and also don't happen to know what *ought* to be done at a given juncture, they find it so easy to fill up odd bars with bowing and curtseying.

What, however, could be more utterly foolish from a common sense point of view?

Just consider a moment. Should *we* be so silly as to keep on bowing and curtseying to one another during a dance *for no reason whatever*? Certainly not. Why, then, should we assume that our ancestors were more foolish than we are? They were not. They never did anything of the kind. There is no authority in support of the assumption; but there is plenty of indisputable authority against it for any one who will take the trouble conscientiously to investigate the matter.

A moment's reflection should suffice to convince any reasonable person of the absurdity of the whole thing. Knowing as we do the characters of the individuals, as handed down to us in the pages of history, can we conceive Louis XIV, proud, vainglorious, fond of absolute authority, bowing and again bowing all through a dance? Can we picture the imperious Elizabeth constantly curtseying to any man with whom she was dancing; or can we imagine her royal father, of domestic notoriety, saluting his fair partner otherwise than in the manner attributed to him by our immortal



bard? "Sweetheart," says the king to Anne Boleyn, with whom he is dancing,

"I were unmannerly to take you out  
And not to kiss you."

Many people who imagine that the ancient gavotte was a stately dance with much bowing, will be surprised to read the following remark with which Jehan Tabourot (who lived from the time of Francis I to that of Henri Quatre, and was of course contemporary with Henry VIII and Elizabeth) began his instructions for the dance.

He says in the quaint French of the sixteenth century: "*Vous ne treuveriez pas de grand peine les branles des gavotes esquelz il ne fault point enlever en l'air les damoiselles, seullement il les fault baiser.*" You need not swing the young ladies round in the air (as in the volta, for instance), but you must kiss them.

The steps of the ancient gavotte were similar to those of the *branles doubles*, but with more brilliant movements, like those of the *gaillardes*, added. During the dance, however, there came a juncture when the male dancer, having finished certain movements with his own partner, "*vient baiser toutes les aultres damoiselles, et sa damoiselle tous les aultres hommes.*"

There may be those who will incline to think that some of the *real* ancient dances were of too genial a nature; but it may be urged that repeated kisses were at least preferable to repeated curtseying, because that would have been not only silly but

also servile. As already stated, many of the old-time dances, like the pavane, tourdion, branle, volta, etc., did *begin* with a bow and curtsey, or *révérence* as it was termed, and Arbeau in his *Orchesography* is very particular concerning the proper manner of performing the same. But although I have searched diligently through many an ancient work on dancing, both French and English, I have never yet discovered any instructions—except in quite unreliable recent handbooks for curtseying in the middle of a dance; indeed, I am convinced that it was never done until the days of Queen Victoria, certainly not in the olden time. If a set dance were arranged for exhibition on ancient lines in which there was *changing of partners*, it might be neither inconsistent nor incorrect for the dancers again to bow and curtsey on meeting new partners, even during the progress of the dance; but such a dance, however well arranged, would still not be the *real thing*, and I cannot too strongly impress upon the reader the fact that repeated bows and curtseys were never made by our forefathers and their partners. The notion may be common, but like many common notions it is entirely false. It is indeed as much opposed to the best traditions of dancing as it is to reason and good sense.

As regards the no less common and equally fallacious notion that all ancient dances were solemn and stately, any student of the art who makes honest, patient research in those volumes where real information may be gained, and who presumably understands French—for it is in that language that the best are written—will soon



discover that the old-time court dances were remarkably varied in construction and diverse in character. A few, indeed, were grave and stately, but many were of a particularly lively, vigorous nature.<sup>1</sup>

Let us consider at greater length a few of those already mentioned.

The pavane was really a grave *terre à terre* dance for couples. Its steps were extremely simple and were founded on those of the still more ancient *basse danse* which Thoinot Arbeau describes as follows: *Vous marcherez en avant du pied gauche pour la première mesure. Puis mettez le pied droit joint avec ledict gauche pour la deuxième mesure. Puis avancerez le pied droit pour la troisième mesure; et à la quatrième mesure et battement, ioindrez le pied gauche avec ledict pied droit, et ainsi sera parfaict le mouvement les deux simples."*

This description, it must be admitted, is somewhat tautologous. If you would do the step as it was actually danced in the pavane, proceed thus:

At the first count bend the knees slightly, and slide the left foot forward to the *fourth position*; and at the second count bring the right toe to the *fifth position* in front, with the toe pointed very much downward, and of course turned well out. After this, you slide the right foot forward, and point the left toe in a similar manner. This completes what Arbeau technically terms "*les deux simples*."

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare employs the adjective *nimble* for the gailliarde, *swift* for the corants, and *high* for the volta.



For the "double" take three smooth *pas marchés* forward, beginning with the left foot, and at the fourth count point the right. Then do the same, beginning with the right, and finish by pointing the left.

Of course a correct attitude and dignified movement for the *pas marché* and a graceful outward curving of the body in pointing the foot was always observed by the dancers. The music of the "most sweet and solemn melody" to which Sir John Davies says the pavane was danced is given by Arbeau in the old notation, and is transposed to the ordinary G and F clefs in my historical work.<sup>1</sup>

The partners, for the greater part, danced hand in hand. Sometimes, when the room was crowded, the man went backward, so that the lady could "see where she was going," otherwise, said Arbeau, "she might fall, which would appear blamable on the man's part, and get him out of her good graces." Arbeau's instructions for the demeanour of the young ladies in dancing the pavane are as follows: "*Et les damoiselles avec une countenance humble, les yeulx baissez regardans quelquesfois les assistans avec pudeur virginale*"—which means that they were to cultivate a modest expression, keeping their eyes lowered; yet they might occasionally look at those around with an air of maidenly modesty.

Arbeau—which was the *nom de plume* adopted by Jehan Tabourot, Canon of Langres—informs his hypothetical pupil that the pavane was a dance in which kings, princes and great nobles could display their dignity on solemn festal occa-

<sup>1</sup> *Dancing in all Ages.*

sions. Needless to say, there was no kissing and no curtsying in the pavane.<sup>1</sup>

And now by way of contrast let us see what kind of a dance the *real* gaillarde was. It will not, I think, take long to discover that it was as different from the pavane as a dance could well be, and we shall easily knock the bottom out of the theory that all ancient dances were of a solemn and stately character. The gaillarde was, as the name implies, one of the liveliest of lively dances. It was considered necessary to be of a gay disposition and to feel in happy mood in order to dance it well. Its movements demanded the greatest agility. To have one foot high in the air was "*gaillarde*," to have both feet in the air was "*encore plus gaillarde*"; but if while both feet were in the air they were crossed or struck together, then it was "*gaillarde in perfection*."

The gaillarde began with a *révérence* to one's partner and also to the company. The steps included *greues*, *ruardes* and the *ru de vache*, these being obsolete terms for movements in which the foot was raised in front, to the rear, or sideways (as the cow is supposed to kick). There were also *fleurets*, *assiettes de pied*, and of course *caprioles*. The partners began sometimes with a little preliminary mimetic performance, the man presenting himself and turning or pirouetting "as he would, first to right, then to left." Meanwhile, as he was so engaged, off went the lady right away from him; and then he, noticing her departure, chased her to the end of the room seeking, as it were, to make her dance with him,

<sup>1</sup> See also Chapter XIII.



much as in the fourlane already described. Then, relenting, she gave him her hand, and they proceeded to dance together. The *pas de gaillarde* were various, and could be selected *ad libitum*. One of the principal steps was as follows:

The music of the dance being in six eight time, the dancers with right and left hands joined, and, *each beginning with the left foot*, took four springing steps forward—left, right, left, right. Then, on the fifth count, resting on and bending the right limb, they sprang in the air, knocked their feet together (something like the “high cut” in the Highland fling, only sideways), coming down on the left foot and immediately pointing the right toe at the sixth count.

This movement was repeated, beginning with the right or pointed foot, and finishing with the *capriole en air*, alighting on the right this time with the left toe pointed at the sixth count.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of the heel striking out a kind of *ailles de pigeon* movement could be substituted in which the limbs were crossed in leaping and the calves struck together.

Another step employed in the gaillarde was in the nature of an *assemblé sissonne*. The feet were brought together at the first count (*assiette de pied*),<sup>2</sup> say, right in front. The dancers jumped off both feet, alighting on the left only at the second count, with the right raised high and pointed in front, and at the third count, bringing the right down *over* the left with a *coupé dessus*, as elsewhere explained. This movement was for the

<sup>1</sup> *Orchesography*, 1588; Rameau, 1725; Feuillet, 1706.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient term.



next three counts repeated with the opposite foot.

Another step was the usual high *capriole à côté*, coming down on the *same foot* after the cut, then pressing the other foot and bending in the *fifth position* in order to make the *capriole* in the opposite direction. In this movement the limbs could be crossed during the beatings at pleasure.

Now you will, I think, understand why Sir John Davies in allusion to the gaillarde wrote :

Oft did she make her body upward fly  
With lofty turns and caprioles in the air.

It was by his extraordinary skill in this dance that young Christopher Hatton first attracted the attention of Elizabeth at one of the court balls. Hence he is sometimes alluded to in literature as "the Dancing Chancellor."

Sufficient has been here explained to show you what kind of a dance the gaillarde was ; to convince you that it required more skill and agility than the ordinary ball-room dancer of to-day possesses ; and also to enable you to discover if ever you should see a dance represented as the gaillarde whether the same is merely a fraud or a conscientious effort to reproduce the *real thing*.

With reference to these old-time dances of which, in addition to descriptive comment, I give actual illustrations in my lecture on "Classic and Ancient Dancing," Mr. Frankfort Moore, the novelist, who was present on one occasion when I commented on the absurdity of the continual bowing and curtsying notion, afterwards wrote to me as follows: "Several years ago I wanted

the pavane danced at the production of my play *The Queen's Room*; but when I found that all the management could do in that direction was to trot out the old thing that you so justly ridicule, I gave up the attempt."

The courante or coranto, which I have explained at greater length in my historical treatise, resembled the gaillarde inasmuch as it was a lively dance; but the steps instead of being of a leaping nature were performed close to the ground. Originally the dance began with a kind of ballet movement, three young men leading three ladies to the end of the room, retiring, and then each approaching his partner with light steps, and making mimetic actions as if courting her; but only to be repulsed by the fair one turning her back on him—" *lui tornoit le dos* "—as Tabourot puts it. It was only after a combined effort on the part of the three gallants, each "*espoussetant et grimdat ses chausses tirant sa chemise bien à propos*"—"pulling himself together," in fact—that the ladies surrendered to the arms of their admirers—" *se rendoient entre leurs bras, et dancèrent ladite courante pesle mesle.*"<sup>1</sup>

Surely there was nothing solemn or stately about this kind of performance. In later years, however, the courante appears to have been somewhat modified, for Rameau, describing it in 1725, says nothing about the above quoted mimetic introduction. He simply tells the pupils, after making the *révérences* which it was customary to make *before* dancing<sup>2</sup> (mark that), to proceed

<sup>1</sup> *Dialogue de la Danse*, 1588.

<sup>2</sup> " *Après que l'un à fait les révérences que se sont ordinairement avant de danser.*"



straight away with the step which he describes as a slide from the fourth position behind to the fourth in front, bending the knees (*pliez*) as the limb passes outward at the side, raising and lowering the supporting heel in so doing. Rameau's description agrees in many respects with that of Feuillet in a work published in 1706. There were other steps in the dance, but all of a light, springy nature, and the feet, as already stated, were kept near the floor.

The dances I have now described were surely of a sufficiently varied character; but the volta was something totally unlike any of these. It was a giddy, whirling movement, extremely difficult to accomplish, one that demanded great agility on the lady's part, and a certain measure of muscular fitness, as well as considerable Terpsichorean skill, on the part of the man.

The volta was, as I have already pointed out, the prototype of our modern waltz; but whereas in modern round dances it is the custom for the lady and her partner to begin with the opposite foot, in the volta the dancers adhered to the old tradition, and each began with his or her left foot, doing exactly the same step. How, then, did they manage to turn round? This it seems was precisely the question put to the master by "Capriol," the pupil in Thionot Arbeau's *Orchesography*. The master, however, gives lengthy, extremely tautological, but not particularly lucid, instructions concerning the *modus operandi*. I have spent much time in studying his quaint descriptions, obsolete terms and extraordinary directions; but must confess that even when I



had successfully grasped the manner of turning, it gave me some trouble to discover exactly how the *saut majeur*, or high leap, which gave the dance its name, was actually accomplished.

It would, of course, have been far easier to adopt the simple plan favoured by so many arrangers of so-called "ancient dances"; that is to invent or evolve something out of one's own imagination and *call* it the "volta." But this method does not appeal to the genuine inquirer. He wants to find out just how a dance was really done, and to do this he will spare no pains. Anything short of the actual dance will not suffice. He will not be satisfied until he has thoroughly worked it out, and reproduced something *as nearly like the original as possible*. It is apparently easy enough to foist spurious "revived" dances on an unenlightened public, but the simple *amour propre* of the true artist would prevent him from profiting by this lack of discernment, even if his higher scruples did not, as they should, condemn such a proceeding as dishonest.

The volta was really a dance of Italian origin.<sup>1</sup> It made its way to France by Provence, the part nearest to Italy. At first the movement was vigorously opposed. It was something entirely different from the kind of dancing to which the sixteenth century social world had been accustomed. Its importation into France was attributed by Jean Bodin,<sup>2</sup> a contemporary writer on demonology, to the machinations of witches. It was feared that

<sup>1</sup> See remarks in Chapter XIII on "The Waltz."

<sup>2</sup> Author of *Demonomanie des Sociers*, 1530-1596. He strongly advocated the burning of witches and wizards.



XIII. "SAUT MAJEUR" OF THE VOLTA.

In which Queen Elizabeth jumped higher than her cousin Mary.





its practice might tend to corrupt French morals which, by the way, were already at that period none too severe.

In spite, however, of all protests the volta triumphed and became quite a favourite dance. It was liked by the men of those days because it enabled them to exercise their muscles and display their strength, and by the ladies because in dancing it they could display their agility.

But it appears that it was necessary for them to take special precautions lest they displayed something more than mere agility in the dance. The Canon of Langres in his previously quoted *Dialogues de la Danse*, after giving instructions for the performance of the *saut majeur* or great leap, modestly observes in his quaint way that the young lady "*de sa part mettra sa main droicte sur vostre dos ou sur vostre collet, et mettra sa main gaulche sur sa cuisse pour tenir ferme sa cotte ou sa robe, affin que cueillant le vent, elle ne monstre sa . . .*" and so on. It is, in fact, evident from the conclusion of the good old Canon's remarks that the volta was a dance of which he did not altogether approve, and also that he was not in the habit of going about with his eyes shut.

Still, whatever may have been his private opinion, Tabourot did not forbear to describe the dance which in his time had acquired a considerable vogue in all the European courts.<sup>1</sup> It was a dance in which both Elizabeth and Mary Stuart excelled. The former was, indeed, not a little jealous of her cousin's Terpsichorean reputa-

<sup>1</sup> "*Sous Louis XII elle vint de Provence à Paris. Elle fut à la mode pendant tout le XVI siècle.*"—Larousse.



tion ; although as regards the volta, Sir John Melville, the Scottish ambassador, expressed the opinion that his own queen did not dance “ so high or so disposedly ” as did Her Majesty of England.

In beginning the volta, after the usual *révérence*, it was customary for the partners to execute a few measures of a still more ancient dance known as the *tourdion*, a kind of modified *gaillarde*. The main step of the volta proper may be described as consisting of a peculiar springing movement (“ *pas en sautant* ”) on to the left foot, a long, light *glissade* with the right, then the “ *saut majeur* ” and posture—“ *en pieds ioincts* ”—with feet together. In performing the “ *saut majeur* ” the man, while turning, has to lift and swing his partner completely round him, as shown in the illustration. Some of Tabourot’s hints for facilitating the raising of the lady are so peculiar that they could hardly be advocated in a modern treatise. He states, however, that the volta admits of a reverse which he, at the same time, confesses is exceedingly difficult to accomplish. It is, but facility in this, as in most things, may be acquired by practice. Nowadays men who have not learnt to waltz scientifically sometimes experience great difficulty in getting their partners round the reverse way ; but reversing in the waltz is the merest child’s play compared with reversing in the volta, for in this you have not only to change the course of direction yourself but to lift and swing your partner round into the bargain.

As an exercise for developing a man’s muscles, surely the volta would compare favourably with any form of gymnastics.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE REAL *MENUET DE LA COUR*

THE advice given by Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, in the well-known letters to his son and godson, although not of the highest ethical order, was strongly characterized by worldly wisdom and common sense. Dr. Johnson's scathing criticism on the moral teaching in these letters was not perhaps entirely uncalled for; but Lord Chesterfield's views with regard to dancing were perfectly sound, and his precepts concerning the art are worth consideration.

He said, for instance, that all men who were good dancers danced well from the waist upwards, which is a correct observation. He expatiated at length on the advantages of receiving good instruction in the art of dancing, and informs his son that so far as social advancement is concerned, his dancing master, who happened to be the famous Marcel, could be of much more use to him than Aristotle. "All your Greek," said he, "will never advance you from secretary to envoy, or from envoy to ambassador; but your address, your manner, your air, if good, very probably may." He meant, of course, that by a thorough study of dancing his son would acquire those physical advantages and that personal charm which the



study of ancient philosophy could never impart, and which would serve him in better stead through the ordinary walks of life than mere erudition without the power of pleasing.

There are modern fathers who would do well to ponder on this piece of advice with regard to their own sons, for it is much the same as that given by Admiral Nelson in a previously quoted letter to a young officer.

Lord Chesterfield was evidently an admirer of the minuet. He makes many comments on the dance, and on one occasion writes to young Stanhope: "As you will be often under the necessity of dancing a minuet, I would have you dance it very well."

Could any advice be sounder than this? Moreover, the young man appears to have profited by it, because on another occasion his father observes that the reason he dances the minuet so well is because he has learnt to go through it mechanically. This remark applies also to other dances. For instance, no one can be said to waltz well until he has learnt to perform the steps mechanically, and until the movements of the entire body become more or less automatic.

There is one more of Lord Chesterfield's observations with regard to the famous dance we are about to consider that I will here quote because it is somewhat curious. It occurs in a letter to his godson. "Do everything," he writes, "in minuet time, speak, think, and move always in that measure, equally free from the dullness of slow, or the hurry of quick time."

Now if you give this suggestion a little careful

thought, you will perhaps find that it is not quite so fantastic as it may at first appear. Lord Chesterfield averred seriously that he had himself derived great benefit from the practice of regulating his daily actions in this peculiar way. Indeed, it seems not unlikely that a person who thought, spoke, and moved always to a kind of imaginary minuet accompaniment would go through life's journey, if not from the cradle at least from adolescence to the grave, in a very serene and dignified manner. It would, for instance, be almost impossible to get violently out of temper to a minuet accompaniment, nor does the stately rhythm of this beautiful dance lend itself to riotous notions or unseemly behaviour of any description. How different would be the demeanour of a person whose thoughts, impulses and passions worked only in ragtime ! What kind of demeanour should we expect from one whose actions were dominated by that distorted rhythm ? In all probability such an unfortunate creature would quickly develop into a criminal of the worst type ; while the soothing influence of the majestic minuet measure could hardly be other than beneficial.

But to return from the regions of speculation to the consideration of facts, let us try to ascertain what kind of a dance the *menuet de la cour* really was ; and let us see that the facts are authentic. As Darwin observes : " False facts are highly injurious, for they often long endure, but false views, if supported by some evidence, do little harm, as every one takes a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness ; and when this is done, one path towards error is closed, and



the road to truth is often at the same time opened.”<sup>1</sup>

The *menuet de la cour* is a dance about which a great deal is talked, but about which, evidently, very little is generally known. For many years past so rarely have anything even approaching the correct steps and figures been shown upon the stage that I question if one person in ten thousand could tell you how the minuet was danced at the French court in its traditional form.

I have myself been a fairly frequent attendant at theatrical performances, and many times have I seen the minuet, or, to be more accurate, what passes for the minuet, in Mozart's opera of *Don Juan*, in Sheridan's *School for Scandal*, and other old plays, with all the stock devices of hand raising, sword crossing, frequent bowing and curtseying, and other meaningless excrescences that had no part whatever in the actual dance. On one occasion, now many years since, it was announced that the late Sir Henry Irving and Miss Ellen Terry, with others of the company, would dance a minuet in the old comedy of *The Belle's Stratagem*. Knowing Sir Henry's reputation for accuracy of detail in his representations, I went to the performance, naturally expecting to see at least some attempt to produce the real dance. But as usual I was doomed to disappointment. The dance was pretty enough in its way, but it was *not the real minuet*, nor did it bear any resemblance to that time-honoured dance.

Having commented on the above mentioned Lyceum performance in a lecture on “Ancient

<sup>1</sup> *Descent of Man*.



Dancing," I was afterwards exceedingly gratified to find that my criticism of the minuet was similar to that passed upon it by Mme. Taglioni, the world's greatest exponent. It was Mr. Frankfort Moore, the novelist, who informed me of this fact. "I was specially interested," he wrote, "in your remarks regarding the minuet. I was present at several of the rehearsals of that minuet in *The Belle's Stratagem* at the Lyceum. Meeting Madame Taglioni some time afterwards, being presented to her by Mrs. Bateman, I had a long talk with her and referred to that particular minuet. She gave a shrug, saying '*Mais oui, il est tres charmant comme un coup d'esprit, mais il n'est pas le vrai menuet.*' "

Of course at the time I delivered my lecture I knew nothing about what Mme. Taglioni had said to Mr. Frankfort Moore, but was pleased to learn that my statements had been verified by so great a *danseuse*. It may perhaps be remarked that I could have selected a far more recent instance in which a pretty but quite unauthentic arrangement of steps and figures has been presented to enthusiastic but unenlightened spectators as the "*menuet de la cour.*" Well, so I could. Examples are not far to seek, but I will forbear. So long as the British public are willing to accept any kind of fancy performance as the minuet merely because the dancers wear old-world costume and powdered wigs, teachers and arrangers of stage dances will not, unless they are more than usually conscientious, be at the trouble to acquire and exhibit the genuine dance.

Suppose some enthusiastic member of a theatrical

company, who happened also to be a lover of good dancing, were to suggest putting on the *real* minuet. I can imagine the director exclaiming, "Oh, nonsense! the public don't care about historical accuracy in dancing. They wouldn't appreciate it in any case. All they want is just a pretty show, and that's what we're going to give 'em."

Suppose, however, that a manager did want to represent or an individual dancer wished to acquire the real dance. It would be no easy matter to find a teacher able to impart it, for the *menuet de la cour* is now known to very few. If you went to the ordinary "dance teachers" they would probably say, "Oh yes, *of course* we teach the minuet." But what kind of a "minuet" would it be? Most likely our old friend with the many bows and curtseys would be trotted out—the absurd thing which, as already stated, does duty for any ancient dance.

Confucius says that true knowledge consists in this: "When you know a thing, to hold that you know it, and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it. That," says he, "is true knowledge." But I suppose it does not do for the ordinary dance teachers to be candid—at least, they seem to think not. If they acted according to the above quoted Confucian maxim they would, if asked for the minuet, have to say: "Unfortunately we do not know the real minuet, but we can teach you quite a pretty fancy dance that we *call* the minuet."

I ventured just now to suggest that not one person in ten thousand has a definite idea how the court minuet was actually danced in its traditional



form. If you would test this after perusing the present chapter, you have only to question those of your acquaintance who are interested in dancing, and you will discover that the common but quite erroneous impression concerning the minuet is that it was a solemn formal dance in which there was no sprightliness of movement but a great deal of bowing and curtseying. If, then, you will enlighten them as to the true nature of the dance, and refer them to these pages, you will be doing a service to the cause of genuine art, and helping to dispel an error that has, through the ignorance or apathy of teachers and exponents, obtained too strong a hold on the public mind.

But you may feel inclined to ask, if this notion of repeated bowing and curtseying is false, why has it persisted so long?

Well, there was a false notion concerning falling bodies that persisted for about two thousand years. It was argued by Aristotle and his followers that if two weights, one, say, of ten pounds and the other of one pound, were let fall from a height, the heavier weight would reach the ground first; in fact, that it would fall ten times as quickly as the smaller one. So the philosophers continued to argue and so the people believed, until one day it occurred to Galileo to put the matter to a practical test. Accordingly he took two unequal weights to the top of the Tower of Pisa, dropped them together, and behold! they both struck the ground at the same instant.

“But what connection is there between this story and the minuet?” you may ask. Why just this. It is one of the most difficult of tasks



to dispel illusions and induce people to give up ideas that have long persisted, however false they may happen to be. There were those in Pisa who, notwithstanding that they had actually seen with their own eyes Galileo's unequal weights strike the ground at the same instant, continued to support the Aristotelian hypothesis. They would not be convinced even by the decision of Nature herself and the evidence of their own senses ; and since they could not satisfactorily explain away Galileo's test, they did their best to shut his mouth by getting him into trouble with the Church.

So it is with any long-standing fallacy. So will it be as regards the one we are now considering. Exponents of dancing though convinced that our ancestors, however courtly their manners, never really kept on stopping to bow to their partner during a dance any more than they kept stopping to bow to their companion during a walk—and the one action would be just as sensible as the other—will nevertheless continue to bow and curtsy all through their make-believe “minuets,” so long as the spectators are willing to tolerate their absurd performance.

But do not think that it is only as regards the frequent bowing and curtseying that the ordinary stage production is unlike the real minuet. *It is unlike the dance in almost every respect.* In stage “minuets” it is by no means uncommon to introduce the device of interlaced arms, turning and crossing before one's partner ; but this, though pretty in its way, does not belong to the minuet at all. It belongs to the *allemande*, a dance of

entirely different character in common time, and should never be exploited in the minuet.

Again, in the *real* minuet, when the fingers of the dancers touch, their arms are never raised above the head. In turning, the proper height to hold the hands is about that of the shoulders, as here shown.

The real *pas de menuet* or minuet step is as unique as it is beautiful. *It is different from all other steps employed in dancing*, and is evidently at the present time but little known among professors and exponents of the art. With the exception of those pupils to whom I have imparted the dance—and it would be useless to attempt imparting it to any but well-trained dancers—I have only seen one exponent illustrate the genuine *pas de menuet* in the correct manner, and that was Mlle. Sandrini of the Paris Opera. What is generally taught and shown as the *pas de menuet* is, as I pointed out in a previous chapter, not the real minuet step at all.

It may be admitted that during its long period of popularity, from the time of Marguerite of Valois to that of the ill-starred Marie Antoinette, the minuet underwent certain changes of form; but the following tests apply to *any genuine minuet of the olden time*, and by comparing what you have seen or learnt as the minuet with what is here stated you will be able to discover if the same has any pretensions to authenticity.

## NINE POINTS.

### *To test the Authenticity of Minuets.*

1. All ancient <sup>""</sup>minuets began and finished with a double *révérence* occupying eight bars of the



music. *There was never any bowing and curtseying during the progress of the dance.*

2. Throughout the minuet, after the initial *révèrence*, each partner used the same foot, and did exactly the same step.

3. The genuine *pas de menuet* began always with the right foot,<sup>1</sup> no matter in what direction it was taken, to the right, to the left, forward, or in turning.

4. The *pas de menuet* occupied two bars of the music, and contained four changes of balance from one foot to the other.

5. The *menuet de la cour* always began by the gentleman leading the lady forward and round him, she moving off to the place whence she started, and he to the opposite corner.

6. In all ancient minuets there was a *traversé oblique*, in which the partners drew back their right shoulders, and looked at each other in passing.<sup>2</sup>

7. In the principal figure of the *menuet de la cour*, from the time of Louis XIV the track of each partner took a form resembling the last letter of the alphabet. Previously it had been taken in a curved direction, the movements being serpentine instead of angular.<sup>3</sup>

8. Throughout the *figure principale*, which was repeated, and occupied the greater part of the time, the partners *danced quite separately*.

<sup>1</sup> "Il faut laisser le corps sur le pied gauche, afin de parer du pied droit pour votre pas de menuet."—P. Rameau, 1725.

<sup>2</sup> "Effacer l'épaule droite l'un et l'autre . . . en vous regardant tous deux en passant."

<sup>3</sup> "Mons Pecour lui a donné toute la grace qu'il a aujourd'hui, en changeant la forme S qu'étoit sa principale figure en celle d'un Z."



9. In the genuine minuet the partners' arms were never interlaced, nor were their hands ever joined, raised high above their heads, and then lowered. These movements, although not artistically incorrect as regards some dances, were not introduced in any traditional minuet.

The diligent reader may rest assured that the above facts are given on the highest contemporary authority. They are based on the teaching of Pecour, Gardel, Marcel, Beauchamp, Rameau, and other distinguished exponents of dancing who lived and taught when the minuet had reached the zenith of its glory and was practised in its purest form.

But apart from expert authority, the following is an obviously non-professional description of the minuet by one who lived when the dance was actually in vogue. It was quoted in a very old number of the *Cornhill Magazine*.

"The cavalier," says this old writer, "takes his lady by the hand and makes two steps forward with her, both keeping on the same line; after which he causes her to describe a circle round him, which brings her to the same spot whence she started. They then cross each other during four or five minuets, looking at each other as they pass, and ending with a profound genuflexion."

This of course is the merest skeleton of a description. It conveys no idea of the actual beauty of the dance, and, as regards the "circle," is not quite accurate—*arc* would be more correct. But to anyone who knows the *menuet de la cour* it must be evident that the writer had seen the *real*

thing. I do not think he was himself a dancer, nor had he seen the minuet danced very well, for he goes on to observe that "the whole is done gravely and without laughing, since the minuet is the most serious diversion known in society." The performance may have appeared ludicrous to the spectator because it was done so solemnly, but evidently the dancers themselves did not see where the fun came in. As a matter of fact, the *menuet de la cour* was not really a serious dance. It was courtly, but not solemn. Magri,<sup>1</sup> writing in the seventeenth century, points out that a smiling mouth was an essential feature—his instructions were, in fact, to "keep smiling." Nor was the *real* minuet an artificial or affected kind of dance, as some people seem to imagine. Rameau's instructions were: "*Surtout sans affectation.*"

It is certain that popular impressions concerning the minuet are greatly at variance with the facts. It was really a symbolic dance. As the British hornpipe is typical of power and energy in manhood, so the French minuet in its traditional form was typical of that respect and chivalrous devotion due from the stronger to the presumably weaker sex.<sup>2</sup> Of course I use the adjectives only in relation to man's superior physical power and that dependence on masculine care and protection that was once—in the days of minuets—so charming a characteristic of gentle womanhood. "*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?*"

<sup>1</sup> Dancing Master to the Royal Military Academy.

<sup>2</sup> "The beauty of women is considerably owing to their weakness or delicacy, and is even enhanced by their timidity."—Edmund Burke, *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*.



“Nobody,” says Lord Morley, in his essay on Popular Culture, “can be sure that he has got clear ideas on a subject unless he has tried to put them down on a piece of paper in independent words of his own.” Now, as regards the minuet, I have already done this in my historical book *Dancing in all Ages*, and have received letters assuring me that the writers have actually learnt the dance from my description. It is possible, however, that if I were to see their performance I should experience little gratification at the result. My own ideas concerning the minuet are perfectly clear, and I may succeed in giving others a clear idea of the figures and some knowledge of the steps employed; but a written description can scarcely impart, even to the most diligent student, those subtle inflexions of the body, those delicate graces of movement on which the beauty of this noble dance so largely depends. These necessary qualities can only be acquired by receiving personal instruction from a teacher of dancing who *happens also to be a thorough artist*, should the reader be so fortunate as to find one. But, as already hinted, the teacher who knows and can properly dance the real minuet is at the present day a *rara avis in terris*. Such teachers are quite as rare in France as in any other country; in fact, the traditional manner of dancing the minuet appears to have been almost lost in Europe.

I will, however, try to give a correct idea of the steps and figures of this famous dance, mainly according to the choreography of Rameau, as dedicated to and approved by King Louis XV.



## STEPS OF THE MINUET.

As previously stated, and according to all genuine authorities, all *pas de menuet* occupy two measures of the music, or six beats.

In minuet music there is always a decided accent on the note occupying the second interval of the bar, as well as on the first and third.

1. *Pas de menuet en avant*. For lady and gentleman. Suppose the right foot to be in the *second or the fourth rearward position*, according to the previous movement, and the balance sustained entirely on the left leg: At the first beat of the bar *begin* to advance the right foot, and as it passes the supporting limb make a decided *plié*, bending the knees well outward and rising on the toes of the left foot as the right is raised high and pointed downward. At the second beat of the bar put the right foot softly down and begin to advance the left, again making a *plié* on the supporting limb (this time the right) and rising on the toes as the left foot is raised and pointed downward. This completes the first measure or bar. At the first beat of the second bar the left foot is put softly down, and two simple steps follow *on the toes only*, forming a *pas de bourrée*, the balance being on the left leg in finishing at the third beat, previous to recommencing the entire *pas de menuet* with the right foot.

In executing the *traversé oblique*, when the step is done the second time in turning to face one's partner, the right foot is crossed before the left on the fifth beat to enable one to revolve on both toes at the sixth, ready for the *pas à droite*.

2. *Pas de menuet à droite.* Starting from the *fifth position*, slide the right toe to the *second position*, but only a very short distance away. Then transfer the balance to the right leg gradually, and bring the left foot slowly to the rearward *fifth position*, the toe only resting on the floor and the sole perpendicular. This completes the first measure. For the second, change the balance to the left foot, dropping on the sole, slide the right foot again to the *second (near) position*, and bring the left to the *fifth position* with the balance thereon to finish.

The forward *fifth position* may be used, but unless the dancers are very expert it does not look so effective as the rearward position.

3. *Pas de menuet à gauche.* Begin by stepping a little forward with the right foot, the toe only on the ground, and making a strong *plié* with the left leg. At the second beat bring the left toe into the *first position*, and with a change of balance and *plié*, begin to slide it towards the *second position*. This completes the first measure. For the second measure, at the first beat drop on to the sole of the left foot, at the second beat draw the right foot slowly up to the rearward *fifth position* and at the third beat extend the left again to the *second (near) position*, taking the balance of the body.

When this *pas de menuet* is repeated to the left, begin by sliding the right foot a little *backward* instead of forward, after which bring the left to the *first position*, and proceed as above described.



## FIGURES OF THE MINUET.

The order of the figures in the *menuet de la cour* as it was danced at the courts of Louis XIV and Louis XV is as follows :

During the first eight bars of music the gentleman, if he wears a hat, removes it, and the partners prepare for and execute a bow and curtsey, move forward and, turning to face each other, with a pivot resembling a waltz movement, make a second bow and curtsey. The first of these *révèrences* would be made by both dancers, with right and left hands joined, to the king, if he were present, and the second, with hands released, to each other.

*There was no more bowing and curtseying till the finish of the dance.*

The gentleman now presents his right hand, palm upwards and with a graceful wrist action, to the lady, who places her left hand therein, palm downwards, but so that their fingers only are touching. They thus make two *pas de menuet en avant*, each starting with the right foot. The gentleman now makes the *pas à droite*, stepping a little backward in passing the lady round before him ;<sup>1</sup> then, releasing hands, they both continue the step to the right till the lady is in the place whence she started, and the gentleman, so to speak, at the opposite corner facing, or rather looking a little over his left shoulder towards her<sup>2</sup> in the position to begin the *figure principale*.

<sup>1</sup> “ *L'homme fait un pas de menuet en arriere pour laisser passer votre demoiselle devant vous.*”—P. Rameau, 1725.

<sup>2</sup> “ *En faisant ce pas vous effacez l'un et l'autre l'épaule droite et la tête un peu tournée du côté gauche en vous regardant.*”



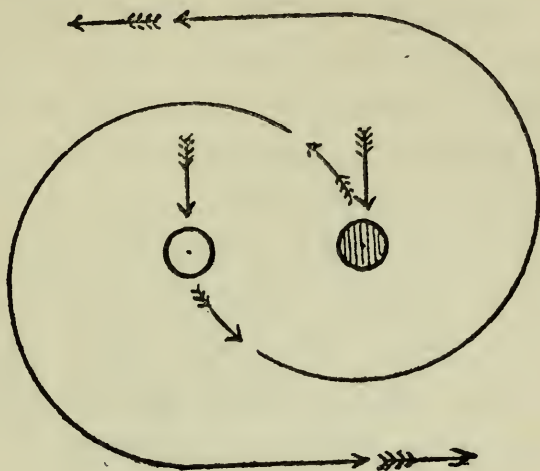


XV. XVI. MINUET. *FIGURE PRINCIPALE AND TRAVERSÉ OBLIQUE.*





This figure, like the initial double *révérence*, occupies eight measures of the music. It contains four *pas de menuet*. The track of the dancers after making the *pas en avant*, or leading forward, may be seen from the diagram.



The famous *figure principale* or **Z** figure, which, as we have already seen was substituted by Pecour for the still more ancient **S** figure, occupies twenty-four measures of the music, that is twelve for the partners to reach opposite places and twelve to resume the positions whence they started. The figure, according to contemporary descriptions of the minuet, was repeated *ad libitum*,<sup>1</sup> but for purposes of exhibition this would of course be a matter of previous arrangement, and would depend on the particular music selected for the performance.

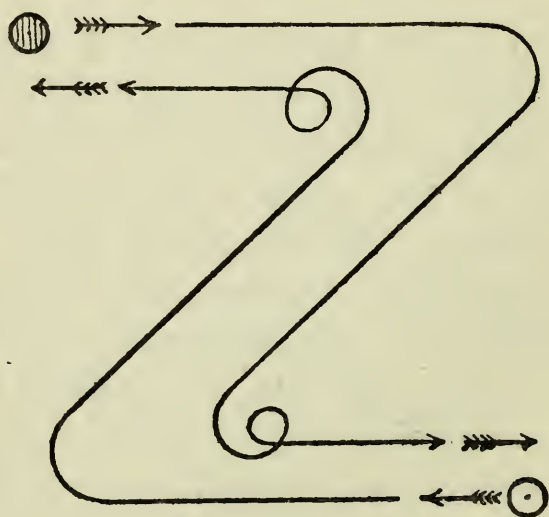
Starting from the positions indicated, the partners make two *pas de menuet* to the left. In the first of these the partners begin by stepping a little

<sup>1</sup> "Lorsque vous avez fait cinque ou six tours de suite."

Again: "Votre *figure principale* qui vous continuez trois ou quatre tours."



forward, and in the second a little backward, so that the distance between them is not decreased. This brings them into the position for making the *traversé oblique*, which also occupies two *pas de menuet*. The first is taken *en avant*, but the partners must be careful to turn their faces towards each other and draw back their right shoulders as they pass. The last part of the second of these *pas de menuet* is made in turning, as already explained, so that the dancers are again facing. Then they take two *pas de menuet à droite* which bring each partner to the position whence the other started. They execute exactly the same movements in returning to their own places, from which they can repeat the *figure principale* or proceed to execute the *tour de main*.



The track of the dancers in this figure may also be seen from the accompanying diagram.

In the next or *tour de main* figure the first two measures are occupied with a *balancé* to present the right hand.

This *balancé de menuet* in its proper form is a somewhat elaborate performance. It is executed thus by each of the partners: As they turn towards each other the right foot is slid forward obliquely and the balance of the body thrown thereon. The left foot is then passed quickly behind and before the supporting limb with a *brisé* action and pointed *en air*, toe downward, while the *balancé* or rising movement is made on the right foot. This occupies the first bar. For the second bar, place the left foot down, pass the right quickly before and behind the left leg, and raise it *en arrière* whilst making the *balancé* or rise on the toe of the left foot.

This *balancé*, if properly done, is one of the most effective movements in the *menuet de la cour*, but of course only very good dancers are able to invest it with the requisite brilliancy and finish. Mediocre performers will find it better to omit the *brisé* or *fouetté* action, even though by so doing they sacrifice something of the beauty of the dance.

In finishing the *balancé* the partners join their fingers, as previously explained, looking towards each other, turning the head a little to the right, and with a slight inclination of the body. They now make a complete *tour de main* to the right, their right hands being joined. This turn is composed of three *pas de menuet* taken *en avant*, the dancers releasing hands during the third and stopping in a position to repeat the *balancé* to present the left hand.

The *balancé de menuet* and *tour de mains à droite* occupy eight measures.

The *balancé* to present the left hand to one's



partner is made in the same manner as in presenting the right hand, only the partners start at a different angle. The right foot is always used in starting, both for the *balancé* and *tour de main* when made to the left. In finishing this turn, which also occupies eight measures, the partners should be by a movement *à droite* in the position to resume the *figure principale*.

Finally, the dancers make the *balancé*, as already described, to present *both hands* and turn. Then the gentleman, keeping only the lady's right hand, releases his left to remove his hat which he has resumed in the course of the dance;<sup>1</sup> and the minuet finishes with a double *révérence* similar to that with which it began. In this case, however, if the king were present, the last *révérence* would be reserved for him.

In the reproduction of Watteau's painting which forms the coloured frontispiece to my treatise on *Dancing in All Ages*, Louis XIV is represented as wearing his hat while dancing the *figure principale* of the *menuet de la cour*. Personally, unless the dance, as in this case, is supposed to take place in the open air, I see no reason to employ the hat as an accessory, and indeed prefer to dance the minuet with head uncovered and hands entirely free.

I believe that from the foregoing description it will be possible for any reader of average intelligence to form a fairly accurate idea how the *menuet de la cour* was really danced. I know myself the right way to dance it; but, as Pericles observes,

<sup>1</sup> " Il quitte la main gauche seulement, pour en ôter du même tems son chapeau."





XVII. XVIII. MINUET. *BALANCÉ* AND *TOUR DE MAIN*.





“He who knows a thing to be right but does not clearly explain it is no better than he who does not know.” That is so far as the explanation is concerned. Therefore I trust that my attempt has not been entirely unsuccessful. But, as already hinted, although it may not be very difficult for the average dancer to perform the figures of the minuet *after a fashion*, it is only the genuine artist who can invest the steps and movements with their requisite grace and true significance.

The *menuet de la cour* in its traditional form is not an easy dance to learn or to teach, nor was it ever considered easy even in the days of its popularity. The steps are difficult if *done as they should be done*, and the movements throughout require finished execution to look effective. But the minuet, as I have elsewhere observed, is the dance *par excellence* to practise for the promotion of gracefulness and, indeed, of beauty. Its proper execution brings every part of the body into harmonious action from the toes to the finger-tips. Arms, legs, head, neck and back are actively employed. Even the features are requisitioned, for, as we have seen, “a smiling mouth” and a pleasant facial expression are essential, and yet the dance must be accomplished “above all without affectation.”

It was when the minuet was at the zenith of its popularity that Voltaire wrote: “*La danse est très agréable ; elle est utile au corps.*” And so we should find it now if it were possible to revive general interest in this beautiful dance, and *teach it in its traditional form*. The minuet is a dance that must be conscientiously studied ; it cannot



be evolved out of the inner consciousness of even the most imaginative teacher.

But whatever difficulties the *real* minuet may present—and it is no use learning any other—whatever demands it may make on the pupil's perseverance and the teacher's patience, the dance is worth acquiring, not only for its intrinsic beauty, but because to the initiated it possesses an esoteric significance beyond what is apparent to the casual observer. The grand old dance is pregnant with meaning ; its every movement recalls the chivalry of bygone days. The sex element is present only in its purest and noblest form.

At all entertainments or exhibitions the public should resent any inferior dance or silly bowing and curtseying performance being presented as a " minuet " merely because of the glamour which attaches to the name.

## CHAPTER XIII

# THE WALTZ

Beneficial Qualities of the Dance and Practical Description.

THE long-continued popularity of the dance we have been considering is, in itself, sufficient to show that the performance of a minuet gave pleasure to those taking part in it as well as to onlookers. But the pleasurable emotions which attended the practice of this queen of old-time dances depended mainly on the dancers' æsthetic perceptions. The steps and movements of the minuet were hardly such as to induce those feelings of exhilaration which are inseparable from purely physical enjoyment. What the partners in a minuet experienced was the pleasure of doing a beautiful thing in a beautiful manner, or at least the gratification of making the endeavour.

As regards the dance we are about to consider—and its consideration in these pages is justified for reasons that we shall presently discover—the pleasure derivable from its practice is of a far more complex nature.

It may be admitted that on purely æsthetic grounds the minuet was in many respects superior to the waltz, especially if we accept the latter



dance as it is generally represented in the modern ball-room. But the genuine gliding waltz, when correctly danced by well-assorted couples, is by no means devoid of artistic merit ; while if exhibited by skilled exponents who know how to bring every part of the body into harmonious action, the movements of the waltz may, as we have occasionally seen, be endowed with perfect loveliness.

Providing always that the steps and movements are executed correctly, the æsthetic perceptions of the partners are gratified by the symmetry of the curves described by the feet in their passage over the floor, the curve described in turning being that known to mathematicians as the cycloid, which, it will be remembered, is the curve traced by a point in the circumference of a moving circle, as a wheel going along a road. Thus the movement is rendered agreeable by the combination of progressive with rotary action. The genuine waltz is a reciprocal dance ; whatever actions assist the progress of and are pleasurable to the one partner being equally helpful and agreeable to the other. In fact, from the time the rotary movement begins, the partners should by centrifugal action become actually as one. And this centrifugal action, *always present when waltzing is perfect*, induces a pleasurable glow of excitement by sending a slight excess of blood to the brain. Then, if the steps are taken as they should be in dactylic rhythm, a specially agreeable sensation is imparted, depending on the increasing and decreasing intensity of motion that cannot otherwise be obtained. Above all, there is the fact that if the waltz is

danced in strict conformity with dynamical requirements, it is possible, when once the movement is initiated, for the partners to continue turning with *scarcely any perceptible muscular effort*.

Not until this state of things is arrived at can waltzing be said to approach perfection.

There must be something remarkably attractive about the waltz, for in its present form it has already enjoyed more than a hundred years of popularity, and who can tell how ancient the rhythmic movement in itself may really be? If we include the more rampant prototype of the waltz, which has already been described, its existence as a round dance for couples extends back more than four hundred years; but, as I pointed out in the chapter on "National Dances," a waltz-like movement existed in the days of Horace; indeed, (there is little doubt that as a rhythmic measure, if not with arm to waist, the waltz figured in ancient temples of the gods. It may even have been danced by youths and maidens in the groves of Arcady.)

It is a matter of regret that, apart from the scholarly account of dancing written by Dr. William C. Smith in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the supplementary information on modern dancing by Mr. Filson Young is not very reliable. He says: "As a matter of fact the waltz, as it is now danced, came from Germany; but it is equally true that its real origin is French, since it is a development of the *volte*, which in its turn came from the *lavorita* (*sic*) of Provence, one of the most ancient of French dances. The *lavorita* was fashionable in



the sixteenth century, and was the delight of the Valois Court." Now this is a contradiction of a previous and correct statement in the same article, viz. : " More lively-dances such as the *gaillarde* and *volta* were introduced into France from Italy, etc." Thus, Mr. Young implies that *la volte* and *la volta* were different dances. But they were not. They were simply the French and Italian names for the same dance, having precisely the same meaning. If *la volta* is the more ancient name, it is because the dance originated in Italy.

Surely Mr. Young should know that in the word "*lavolta*," as he writes it, the article is merely added to the noun, and that the proper way of writing it is *la volta*. But Mr. Young says " the *lavolta*," which is the same as if one said " the *lavalse*." It is true that Shakespeare says : " They bid us to the English dancing-schools, and teach *lavoltas* high,"<sup>1</sup> but he does not *double the article*. As to Mr. Young's assertion that " the *volte* as danced by Henry III was really a *valse à deux pas*," it would be interesting to know by what process of reasoning, if any, he arrived at such an odd conclusion, and how he accounts for the *saut majeur* or great leap which, as we have seen, was the principal feature of the *volta*.

Among other errors in Mr. Young's supplementary contribution to the article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, he speaks of the *pavane* as a kissing dance, which it certainly was not. He says the *courante* " was performed on tiptoe, with slightly jumping steps, and many bows and

<sup>1</sup> *Henry V*, Act III, Scene 5.

curtseys." Like other writers with only a superficial knowledge of the art, he cannot disassociate the idea of old-time dancing from the idea of frequent bowing and curtseying. As regards the minuet, he actually says: "It was a school of chivalry, courtesy, and ceremony: the hundred slow graceful movements and curtseys, the pauses which had to be filled in by neatly-turned compliments, etc." Now what does he mean by this? Does he mean that there were a hundred movements, or a hundred curtseys, a hundred of each, or of both together? Is the statement meant to be taken seriously, or is it a figure of speech, or merely a joke? In any case, it is absurd, seeing that the slow movements of the *real* minuet were comparatively few, and that there was never any curtseying except at the beginning and finish of the dance.

Having now called attention to a few of Mr. Young's errors—and I should not have done this but for the fact that articles in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* are supposed to be authoritative—I will venture to quote a remark of Mr. Young's with which all people of good taste will heartily agree. Speaking of the waltz, he says: "There are variations which include hoppy and lurching steps; these are degradations, and foreign to the spirit of the true waltz." Quite so. If Mr. Young's conclusions on historical and traditional questions are sometimes at fault, his taste is sound, and he is right in his opinion of modern ball-room dancing.

It is well that, despite the efforts persistently made in recent years to destroy its beauty by



the admission of decadent innovations, the popularity of the genuine waltz has not really diminished—at least, among those who are sufficiently good dancers to be able to dance it. For apart from the mere pleasurable excitement of rapid motion, the waltz is the only dance now generally practised in society that makes any direct appeal to the æsthetic faculties or admits the elements of romance.

But how few amongst those who slide, hop, shuffle or twist about in the ordinary ball-room under the impression that they are waltzing have any conception of the pleasure that may be derived from the dance in its really perfect form! Even among those who enjoy the reputation of being good dancers, I doubt if one in twenty has ever experienced the delight of waltzing that is *absolutely reciprocal*, since to experience this one must not only waltz perfectly oneself, but it is essential that one's partner should also waltz perfectly, and, as some of us have good reason to know, perfect waltzers are few and far between. There are, of course, many waltzers who "manage to get round," as they express it, and some of these would doubtless resent being told that their movements were incorrect—not strictly in conformity with the dynamics of waltzing. They are satisfied with their own performances, but that is simply because they have never experienced anything better. They are like the people living in a small village who, never having travelled elsewhere, imagine it to be the finest place in the world. To any one who had never seen the Alps, the Sussex Downs might appear,

as they did to White of Selborne, "a lofty chain of mountains." There is as much difference between what usually passes for waltzing and the *real thing* as there is between Selborne and Paris, between the Sussex Downs and the Alps, between gooseberry wine and champagne.

One reason why good waltzers are so rare, and anything like *perfect* waltzing so seldom attained among the numerous votaries of the dance, is because few teachers possess the knowledge of anatomy and physics without which it is impossible to impart that perfect co-ordination of the various parts of the body, that perfect reciprocity between the partners so necessary for this particular movement.

And ordinary "dance teachers"—I am not speaking of the few professors who are really masters of their art—appear to be well aware of their deficiency, for instead of doing their utmost to preserve the waltz in its *most perfect form* for the delight of future generations, they have for years past seized upon every opportunity to destroy its beauty by promulgating all kinds of disfiguring innovations.

We are here concerned only with what is salutary and beautiful in dancing. That alone is the kind I would advocate, and this being so, I must risk offending the disseminators of "freak" practices by a few candid observations. The fact is "dance teachers" (I use the term literally to distinguish them from *bona fide* professors of *the art*) do not like imparting the waltz. They realize that their methods of instruction are unsatisfactory. It gives them a good deal of trouble



even to get their pupils to do the steps of the waltz correctly, and when at length these are acquired there is all the labour of dragging the pupils round. It is so difficult to get them to turn sufficiently, especially the men. They stick fast, as it were, and do not seem to make any further progress. Then they are apt to get disgusted, and give up the attempt to learn waltzing as hopeless.

Such is the too frequent experience of the ordinary non-scientific teachers as regards the waltz. From their point of view how much easier and, indeed, more profitable it seems to impart some kind of movement that *any one* can accomplish, no matter how poor or foolish a thing it may be. Some step or movement that will not strain the teacher's mental or physical capacity, and yet will appeal to the pupil—if he or she happens to be sufficiently credulous—as “the latest thing in dancing.”

And unhappily for the art, but fortunately for the kind of teachers to whom I am alluding, there is a *word* that for some unaccountable reason has during the past thirty years or so exercised an irresistible power of fascination on most bad and not a few fairly good ball-room dancers. It seems as if to the ordinary dancer the *word* were as potent in its way as was “*abracadabra*” to the cabalist, while to the teacher its importance is not a little analogous to that which the magician attributed to “*hocus pocus*.” And it is clearly the *word*, not the movement—which at various periods has been of a totally different character—that is so strangely attractive. And

yet it is only the *name of a town*. The soothing influence of "that blessed word 'Mesopotamia'" was nothing compared with the influence of that blessed word "Boston!" It is all very well to say the dance, movement, or whatever one may call it, is dead now and that it was superseded by the so-called "hesitation" waltz, the "one-step" and "foxtrot." That may be, "*mais il y a les morts qu'il faut tuer encore*." The "Boston," like the phoenix, will rise again from its own ashes, though probably in quite an altered form. Like Proteus it constantly changes its shape. Thirty years since it was a long slide and a twist on one foot, then it was a dipping movement. A decade later, amongst other forms, it took that of an elongated shuffle and a half turn. The *word* also was used for a reverse movement, and many other things. Then the so-called "Boston" had a long and well-earned rest. It seemed almost as if it would be heard of no more. But ere many years had elapsed back it came like the proverbial cat, and this time its manifestations were more various than ever. It was a zigzag movement; it was a long rectilinear movement; it was a slow, smooth, not ungraceful movement; and withal it was, at the same time, a quick, running movement—"men and women trotting over the floor of a ball-room, reminding one of the stampede of a poultry-yard when the hen-wife appears with an apronful of corn." That, at least, is how my friend John Mackie the novelist describes it in his excellent story *The Great Antarctic*.

Yes, the term "Boston" has been given to



all these and many other movements. Moreover, it has been run through the multiplication table—doubled, tripled, quadrupled, and so on. We have also heard something about a “drop one” and a “drop three Boston.” In short, the name of this particularly favoured town has covered every conceivable kind of innovation or distortion of the waltz. Some of the movements, as already admitted, have been fairly graceful—such may be better described as WALTZ-VARIATIONS—more have been ungraceful, and, unhappily, not a few disgraceful. The great majority, however, have been simply idiotic.

But what a boon have these indefinite and alluring words, such as “Boston,” “Hesitation,” and the like proved to incompetent teachers! From the fact that they have no real Terpsichorean significance, and may be tortured to mean *anything*, all kinds of absurdities may be danced or taught by such names. So the mushroom growth of *soi-disant* professors who spring up with a passing craze, who care nothing for art, who cannot satisfactorily teach the genuine waltz, and are out only for money, have been able to profit by public credulity to any extent. Says Butler in his *Hudibras* :

Doubtless the pleasure is as great  
Of being cheated, as to cheat,

so why should they trouble to qualify themselves to impart what is good, while people are satisfied to learn rubbish, and indeed seem eager to be fooled?

As I pointed out in a little treatise on the

subject published the year before the war, a great deal of that confusion of ideas which existed with regard to this kind of dancing, so far as the public were concerned, had its origin in the fact that people did not at first realize that the steps of the genuine waltz, with the correct rhythm, could be taken in any conceivable direction across the floor. "Their ideas of the waltz were associated only with the idea of turning round and round. Consequently, for want of a better term, they proceeded to designate every kind of rectilinear movement they chanced to see danced to waltz music by the very inapposite title 'Boston.' "

As a matter of fact, whatever was best in the so-called "Boston"—all that is worth preserving—may be included in the far more satisfactory terms "Rectilinear" or "Diagonal waltzing"; for these, at least, convey some definite idea. The term "Boston," as I pointed out in the *Daily Telegraph*,<sup>1</sup> was too often "a mere euphemism for incapacity of performance," and it is high time it was discarded once and for all by lovers of genuine dancing. Whatever movements *do* properly belong to the waltz, no matter how varied their nature, should be included in the general term "ORNAMENTAL WALTZING" and they should all be danced *in strict accordance with the waltz measure*. It is only the worst of bad teachers who insult their pupil's intelligence by telling them to dance *out of time* with the music. Any fool can do that. The great point is to get pupils to dance *in time*. Whatever movements *do not*

<sup>1</sup> February 3, 1913. Leader page.



*properly belong to the waltz* should either be danced to special music of their own or relegated to the limbo of worthless things. Being practically dead themselves, they should not be allowed to continue a vampire existence drawn solely from the vitality of the dance they would destroy.

But we cannot here afford to waste time by dwelling further on the many freakish movements which have disfigured ball-room dancing—"the brood of Folly, without father bred!"—movements that could hardly have survived their birth had they not been fostered by professional cupidity. Let us resume consideration of the genuine rhythmic waltz, and I will endeavour to show how the practice of this most beautiful of modern dances, when it has been *properly taught* and *correctly acquired*, may contribute not a little to the strength of men and the loveliness of women.

First as to its symbolism—for the dances that are best worth dancing have all some meaning—in the little treatise to which allusion has already been made, I pointed out that ~~if~~ the waltz cannot be said to typify courtesy, respect, and chivalrous devotion *in excelsis* like the grand old minuet, it may at least express watchful care and manly protection. The male waltzer who knows his art will guide a partner through the intricacies of a crowded ball-room even as he would guide her safely through the tortuous path of life. And he is mindful that she receives no hurt. If collisions seem inevitable through the fault of others, he will shield her with his person and himself receive the impact. The lady for the time being

has placed herself under his protection, as it were, and he will not betray her confidence. He knows when to urge her onward, when to restrain her footsteps, when to turn her aside from even a faintly expressed purpose that he deems fraught with danger. And in waltzing as in matrimony we see the disastrous consequences which sometimes follow when each attempts to take the lead. .

Such appears to be the esoteric significance of the waltz, in explaining which the reader will, I trust, excuse my repetition of words that I have already used elsewhere. But we have now to consider how the practice of genuine waltzing conduces to physical well-being, how it develops muscular power and enhances beauty.

We have already seen that ~~there~~ are many pleasurable qualities ~~appertaining~~ to the waltz; indeed, more than to any other dance; and ~~presently we shall see that~~ of all dance movements it is the one most perfectly in accordance with the principles of human mechanism. Therefore, rightly imparted and rightly practised under proper conditions, waltzing as an exercise must prove beneficial to the health of those with whom the turning movement does not disagree. The number of people who experience ill-effects from waltzing is comparatively very small, and in nearly every case the drawback may easily be obviated by elongating the elliptic figure of rotation, by having frequent recourse to the practice of reversing and such rectilinear movements as are not incompatible with the true spirit, rhythm and, I may add, dignity of the waltz.



In using this expression understand me to refer only to the straight-limbed gliding waltz, and not to the weak, bent-kneed, or "hoppy" varieties whose votaries, it must be admitted, do not present a very dignified appearance. But this "hoppy" kind of waltzing is only resorted to by indifferent dancers who, from lack of proper instruction, have been unable to acquire the genuine movement. No one who has ever experienced the pleasure of really reciprocal waltzing would dream of doing anything so alien to the true spirit of the dance as to "dip" or to hop even momentarily from the floor. The peculiar "twinkling" appearance of the feet, as it were, so noticeable in genuine waltzing, is quite a different thing. It is caused by a muscular contraction of the supporting limb in passing rapidly from the second to the third step, as I will presently explain.

Previous to the last "Boston" epidemic there was a period when the "hoppy" waltz, or rather the "hoppy" style of waltzing, was *supposed* to be fashionable, especially by the unenlightened in such matters; so, as, usual, the third-rate dance teachers seized the opportunity of destroying the waltz by imparting this bad style to their young pupils; and, by contrast, the smoother movements of the so-called "Boston" appeared relatively graceful.

But the prevalence of specially pronounced movements in ball-room dancing is always more or less illusory. As I pointed out about that time in *Sandow's Magazine*, half a dozen jumping couples, like the half-dozen importunate grass-

hoppers in Burke's well-known simile, will attract more notice than will fifty gliding couples meandering gracefully through a waltz, and to the casual non-observant onlooker it might seem as if the majority of those present were doing the "hoppy" movement. And so with regard to other absurd and objectionable practices, half a dozen semi-demented couples rushing about in a crowded room, darting hither and thither in unexpected directions like a motor-car driven by a drunken chauffeur, will naturally draw a good deal of attention to themselves, if not of the most complimentary kind, and perhaps to a person entering the ball-room it might appear as if most of the dancers had taken leave of their senses, whereas in reality it is only the few.

That the practice of good waltzing tends to develop the muscles, especially of the male dancer, there can be no manner of doubt. In one bar special demand is made on the flexor muscles of the left limb, while in the next a vigorous tension of the extensors in the right limb is called for; and this muscular action is, of course, transposed in reversing. Although the movement should be devoid of undue strain or exertion, and even of conscious effort, it is certain that the *rectus femoris* muscle may be wonderfully developed by waltzing—that is, of the straight-limbed manly kind—as may also the *vastus internus* and the *vastus externus*. In turning the ordinary way the man's *biceps* is naturally brought into action, while in reversing he employs, or should employ, the *triceps* and *deltoid* muscles to impel his partner in the opposite direction. Waltzing also brings the *dorsal* muscles



into play and imparts great flexibility to the loins. In both male and female dancers the practice of genuine waltzing induces a sinuous action of the vertebral column, and when girls have been taught to move their bodies in accordance with natural laws, alternately curving the spine *a little outward* and slightly relaxing the tension, the movement from a physiological point of view is highly beneficial.

Needless to say, the sinuosity thus imparted is conducive to general gracefulness, and as we have seen that easy rhythmic exercise, especially if of a pleasurable and exhilarating kind, relaxes the facial muscles and softens the expression, it follows that the practice of good waltzing must tend to improve the dancer's looks.

But the beneficial effects produced by waltzing depend largely upon the manner in which the dance is taught—whether on scientific or merely empiric lines. Many people still imagine that it is only necessary to acquire the “*right step*,” as they say, in order to become a waltzer. It does not, however, by any means follow that because a pupil has succeeded in learning the steps of the waltz he or she will be able to waltz satisfactorily with a partner. But, on the other hand, there are people who manage to waltz fairly well with partners, yet are quite unable to explain, or even to show—which is much easier—what steps they do.

As a matter of fact, the best dancers are those who have acquired, either spontaneously or by good instruction, a perfectly harmonious co-ordinate action of the various parts of the body. The

waltz happens to be a dance which instead of being taught *from the feet upwards*, as it were, should be taught *from the shoulders downwards*. This statement may at first strike the non-scientific reader as being contrary to the recognized order of things, but a little consideration will suffice to show that it is right.

It has been explained elsewhere in these pages that in natural walking it is the *shoulders* that initiate the movement, and by a simple experiment you may convince yourself that it is the *shoulders* that initiate the movement of the body in *natural* turning. You have only to walk a few steps forward and then suddenly twist round on your right foot to come back. You will find, if you do this without pause, that the head and shoulders turn first and the left foot last, so that when you are "right about face" the left shoulder is more forward than the left foot.

To the general disregard of this very obvious fact among teachers of dancing much bad waltzing may be attributed. If you are a male pupil, your teacher will probably tell you to begin by "putting your left foot round." This advice you will proceed to follow, and so long as you are taking the steps *alone*, you may be able to turn. But when dancing with an ordinary partner you will experience a difficulty in bringing her round sufficiently, and however many lessons of the kind indicated you may take, the result is likely to prove unsatisfactory for the simple reason that it is with the *arm and shoulder* you bring the lady round, and no matter how beautifully you may take your steps these are of no avail



whatever unless the action of the upper part of the body is accordant and synchronizes therewith.

It is difficult to explain in writing exactly how the steps of the waltz should be taken, but I would suggest that the male pupil may proceed as follows :

Begin by turning the shoulders until your *back* is towards the direction you wish to take, and let the left foot slide round to *follow the action of the shoulder*, so that in finishing the turn (which of course is made on the sole of the right foot) the left is a little *behind* the shoulder, as if you were stepping backward. This is the *first* step. For the *second*, swing the right leg round from the hip, the thigh-bone turned well out, till the toe comes lightly to the left heel. For the *third* step, pressing *very* little on the right toe, twist round on the sole of the left foot (which throughout must sustain your balance) till you are *facing* the direction you wish to take ; and in doing this make a slight flexion of the left knee and sudden muscular contraction to draw the foot just a little back—from under you, as it were—behind the right.

This triple action of the limbs completes one bar of the music. For the *first* step of the next bar, slide the right foot a little forward, *between the partner's feet*, keeping the knee *absolutely rigid* by tension of the extensor muscles. For the *second* step, the right leg still retaining the balance, swing the left round *quite relaxed*, so that the toe describes an arc in passing over the floor. Then, for the *third* step, without allowing any weight to fall on the left toe, twist the right foot

completely round, at the same time moving it a little on by a muscular flexion and contraction of the limb.

These steps or movements, six in all, should bring you and your partner into the same position as you were in starting, of course plus the onward progression you have made.

The waltz steps for the lady are similar ; only in dancing with a man she will begin by sliding the right foot forward between his feet, doing the three steps last described for the first bar, and the three first described for the second bar. It does not matter in which order the steps are learnt. The whole movement must become more or less automatic before the pupil can derive any real pleasure from waltzing, or indeed before he or she can waltz at all successfully with a partner.

Of course it has here been necessary for me to describe in detail the various movements of the feet ; but in imparting the waltz personally it is possible for a teacher who really understands the physical and anatomical aspects of dancing to take a pupil by the shoulders and by drawing, pressing and impelling in this and that direction to control his or her movements in such a manner that the correct steps and muscular action of the limbs are acquired *almost spontaneously* and become automatic at the outset. It has, indeed, often been my own experience that after an hour's instruction of this kind the pupil *who has not previously learnt a wrong method of taking the steps, or acquired false habits of movement*, will appear to waltz with a good partner as well and as naturally as if he or she



had been practising in the ordinary way for years.

There are many men to whom the reverse action in waltzing seems to present an almost insuperable difficulty. It is comparatively easy for a girl to reverse provided she puts her *left foot forward* at the proper juncture and does not break the sequence of steps and successive alternations of balance. But for a man the circumstances are altogether different. He has not merely to learn the opposite manner of doing the steps. He must learn how to convey to his partner his intention to change the direction of rotation; for in waltzing, as in all social dancing, it is proper for the man to take the lead, and he should control his partner's movements almost entirely with his right arm. When, therefore, we consider how muscular action results from the impulse of the will conveyed through the agency of the nerves, it is obvious that any perplexity or indecision arising in the man's mind as regards the right course to pursue will manifest itself in a feeble erratic action of his arm. Consequently the girl's movements, instead of being duly controlled so that she responds immediately to the impulse, will be only partially influenced, sufficiently, perhaps, to cause her to deviate from the track she has already been taking, but not sufficiently to indicate a new direction. Needless to say, the result of half measures in this respect are always disastrous. Firmness, strength, and decision of purpose are essential qualities in the man who would become a really good waltzer.

It will be evident that successful reversing demands a considerable display of muscular activity on the man's part. We know that bodies in motion exercise an influence on one another in proportion to their weight multiplied by the square of their velocity. Consequently, in order to arrest his partner's progress in a rotatory movement when she has acquired considerable momentum, and at the same time impel her in the opposite direction, a degree of force may be brought to bear which, had she been at rest, would have sufficed to throw her down, but which, in the circumstances, will only aid her movements and impart that kind of confidence which a girl likes to feel in the guidance of the man with whom she is dancing.

But the action must on no account be done too suddenly so that the lady is taken by surprise, nor should there be any spasmodic tension of the muscles. There are several ways by which the reverse may be successfully accomplished; but if you, reader, are a male dancer, *experto crede*, you may take it from me that the following is one of the best.

Assuming, then, that you are turning to the right—the ordinary way; when you wish to change the course of direction, instead of sliding your right foot forward between your partner's feet, place it down *firmly* to your right, a little behind the left foot. While doing this, gradually cease drawing the lady round and exert the muscles at the *back* of your arm (triceps and deltoid) to arrest her further progress. You will now be in an ideal position to put forth your strength



and throw the lady round in the opposite direction boldly, but *of course gently*. You must not lose the rhythmic feeling of the waltz in your limbs, but should pause *a whole bar* to overcome the effects of inertia, and then slide the *left foot forward between your partner's feet* while impelling her over to the left side with your right arm as you begin to turn in that direction. So long as you can keep the angle which your right arm makes with your chest *acute*, you will be able to continue reversing with a minimum of effort, but directly the angle becomes obtuse, you will no longer have the requisite power to keep your partner in the proper position, and had better resume the ordinary direction before coming to grief.

There are men who reverse without changing their relative position as regards the lady, continuing to put the right foot *somehow* between her feet. There are others who, while putting the right foot backwards, as they should in turning the reverse way, slide the left forward *outside* instead of between the lady's feet, which is clearly incorrect. These, however, are perfunctory methods, and are only adopted *faute de mieux* by men who have either "picked up" their waltzing or have not been properly taught to dance. So far as the comfort of the lady is concerned, and indeed the pleasure of both partners, there can be no comparison between the right and the wrong methods of reversing.

Other things being equal, it is obviously easier for a strong man to reverse than for one who is deficient in muscular power. A man of determined nature will also reverse better than one

of a vacillating disposition. But much may be accomplished by scientific instruction and the right kind of practice. A *well-taught* pupil who is weak will do better than an *ill-taught* pupil, even if he possesses a giant's strength ; and the well-taught pupil will have the advantage of developing those muscles that should properly be brought into play. A too impulsive man should avoid the waste of energy entailed by attempting to reverse while in rapid motion, or while advancing, since he is thus needlessly expending on his own movements the muscular power that should be conserved towards directing the movements of his partner.

The pupil who has been badly taught, or who has fallen into what I have described as a weak-kneed style of waltzing, may wonder why I should so persistently urge the importance of keeping that limb rigid with which the forward step is made. The reasons are various. To keep the limb straight in making a forward movement is, as explained in a former chapter, compatible with the laws of gracefulness, and although a strong action of the flexor muscles is called for in the rearward half turn, nothing looks more undignified than a male waltzer who habitually bends his knees. Again, much of the physical pleasure, apart from æsthetic considerations, depends, as already stated, upon the centrifugal action, or force generated by the partners drawing slightly away from one another in turning. When waltzing is really *perfect* and *reciprocal*, the man can bring his partner round merely by the proper adjustment of his centre of gravity which, at a



certain juncture, falls a little outside his individual base, and enables him, by *utilizing his weight*, to accomplish his purpose without effort ; whereas in ordinary *imperfect* waltzing he drags or pushes his partner round by muscular exertion. Perfect waltzing, however, demands firmness of limb ; for if the lady draws slightly away, as she should, to the right—*his* right—and the man instead of resisting, as he should, by muscular contraction of the right limb, *gives* in that direction, he not only risks falling but destroys the exhilarating effects of centrifugal action.

In making any rectilineal waltz movement the foot in the second step should always *pass beyond* the foot with which the first step has been taken, describing an arc in its passage from the *fourth* rearward to the *fourth* forward position, or *vice versa*. The forward or backward steps in waltzing should be the direct antithesis to a *chassé*. Practice of the so-called “two-step,” which is nothing but a *chassé à trois pas*, or galop step—so many movements each way—is by no means advisable for pupils who are learning to waltz.

In the correct forward waltz step the right foot is slid forward at the first count with a strong tension of the muscles about the knee. Then immediately the left toe skims very lightly over the floor *en arc* till it is a little in advance of the right or supporting limb. At the third count, without removing the weight from the right leg, by a slight flexion and contraction of the muscles in the right limb the foot is brought up against the left foot of which the heel is still raised so that the limb is free immediately to continue

the step. In the next bar it is the left foot that is slid forward with a strong muscular tension, the right toe which describes the arc, and the left foot which is drawn to the right heel.

In the rearward rectilineal movement the left foot at the first count is slid backward, strongly flexed, and taking the weight of the body. Then the right toe passes lightly over the floor in a curved direction till it is a little behind the left or supporting limb. At the third count, without changing the balance, the left foot is drawn backwards by muscular contraction to the right toe, which must be kept free and ready to slide back immediately for the first step of the next bar.

When the rectilineal waltz steps are correctly danced, the curves described by the feet in passing over the floor form in two bars the figure known as Hogarth's "line of beauty."

In describing these steps I have again been obliged to explain and dwell on each movement of the feet; but in actual waltzing the three steps in each measure should rather be taken as a whole, the dancer bearing for one bar on the right limb, and for the next on the left. Moreover, the rhythm *must always be dactylic*. This means that the *duration* of the first step should equal that of the other two together, albeit that the second is the longest so far as *movement* is concerned.

But due attention to the carriage of the upper part of the body and the action of gravitation on the relaxed limb—that which swings freely from the hip joint in the second step—forward and backward movements in waltzing may be



taught so that the feet of the dancer move automatically into the right positions, and mistakes of step *become impossible*. This desirable state of things may very quickly be brought about under the direction of a scientific and expert teacher, but by ordinary "rule of thumb" methods it is seldom acquired ; indeed, never unless the pupil happens to fall into it intuitively.

Many waltzers experience difficulty in changing from the rotatory to the rectilineal movement, and *vice versa*. The reasons for this I will try briefly to explain. The figure described by the partner's feet in turning is elliptical rather than circular, the centre of rotation being a shifting centre, alternately nearer to one and the other dancer. This is sufficiently clear, for if the centre were fixed midway between them they would gyrate all the while in the same spot. Still, allowing for this, we may take it approximately that the feet of the dancers in rotation would cover something like three times the distance they would in going forward or backward in a direct line. It therefore follows that so soon as the partners begin the rectilineal movement, taking six steps to two measures of the music, although the feet move only about a third of the distance they moved while turning in the preceding two bars, yet these steps must occupy *exactly the same time as did the rotatory ones*.

Clearly, then, in order not to break the rhythm, the dancers must pause longer on each step, moving in what appears a more leisurely manner. If the *first step especially* is not sufficiently dwelt upon, the second or light step becomes a *chassé*

instead of an arc, swinging by gravitation into the wrong position, and the whole movement degenerates into a *chassé à trois pas* or "two-step"—a step which many bad dancers do in going forward under the impression that they are waltzing.

So far as the difficulty of resuming the rotatory movement is concerned, this depends a good deal on the resumption of centrifugal action, which of course ceases when the movement is rectilinear. The main point for the man to remember is that he should begin *turning his shoulders* during the three steps when his balance is on his *right leg*. This will bring him into the position in which he usually starts to waltz with his left foot. He should also remember that whereas in going forward he has been impelling his partner with his arm at right angles to his chest—assuming her to be in front of him—he must, in beginning to turn, gradually resume the *biceps* action to bring her round.

In considering *The Beautiful in Dancing*, we have seen that in *terre à terre* movements and steps of a gliding nature the quality of lightness depends not so much in rising on the toes as in the avoidance of friction. There are junctures in waltzing when it is advisable that the man's heel should rest on the floor in order that he may obtain the firmness of balance necessary to control his partner's movements; but in those steps in which the limb swings by its pendulum action from the hip joint—as it does in perfect waltzing—the toe only should be allowed to touch the floor. Heaviness in waltzing is generally attributable



to unscientific teaching. Any pupil, however ponderous, may acquire the art of waltzing lightly from a teacher who really understands the dynamics of dancing.

The male reader may easily discover whether he has acquired a good style of waltzing by the manner in which he can answer the following questions :

Are you able to move your partner quite easily in any direction, forward, backward, or the reverse way, without having to convey your intention by word of mouth? Do your knees ever come in contact with those of the lady? Do you occasionally dance *on* instead of *between* her toes? Do you feel that there is *perfect reciprocity* of movement between your partner and yourself—that for the time being you form with her a single body, as it were, influenced as such by natural laws? Do your combined movements convey the impression of unanimity of purpose, or do you have rather the appearance of antagonists engaged in a tussle? Do you readily make onward as well as rotatory progress, or have you a tendency to flounder about aimlessly in the same spot? Can you start waltzing boldly and readily at any juncture, or do you have to wait for the beginning of a tune? Do you have occasion to think about your steps, or can you glide at will over the floor in any conceivable direction, conscious only of a smooth, delightful, exhilarating sense of motion in which the limbs move almost entirely without effort?







XIX. CLASSIC MOVEMENT.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CLASSIC DANCING

#### The Greek Ideal.

THERE are two distinct styles of dancing to which the term "classic" may be applied. It may be taken to mean that the style so called is the highest and best of its kind, like that formerly exemplified by such world-renowned artists as Marie Taglioni and Carlotta Grisi, and later by Mmes. Pavlova and Karsavina; for, as we have already seen, the dancing of the Russian Ballet is based on the teaching of the Italian school. On the other hand, the term "classic" may be used to indicate a style of dancing such as we may reasonably suppose would have been approved by the ancient Greeks, a style that would have expressed their ideals; dancing such as might have been led by Golden Helen or practised at Arcadian festivals; dancing that calls up delightful visions of the world's youth, when, in the intervals of heroic action, the chief business of life was the pursuit of happiness and the culture of beauty.

This latter is the style of classic dancing to which I would now draw the reader's attention. But unfortunately much of the dancing shown upon the modern stage and imparted by teachers



as "classic" is in reality nothing of the kind. The chiton and the sandal alone do not suffice to make a dance *classic*, any more than the powdered wig and old-time costume suffice to make a dance *ancient*; but too often in either case the costume of the dancer is the only characteristic feature that meets the eye. Whoever would undertake the arrangement of a dance on truly classic lines must understand the underlying principles of Greek art, have some acquaintance with Greek history, and know something about the manners and customs of the ancient Greeks.

A great deal of historical information concerning the development of Greek dancing may be found in Grote's *History of Greece*, much anecdotal information in the *Deipnosophists* of Athenæus, and many critical observations in the *Laws* of Plato. As a matter of fact in all, or at least nearly all, the classics, whether historians, poets, dramatists or philosophers, we find information about dancing, because with them, as we have seen, it was a subject of the greatest importance. Even their dramatic dancing was in a sense sacred, for their theatre was not a place of amusement merely, as with us. It was actually a temple, the altar of whose god stood in the central part of a vast semi-circular auditorium. The kind of information, however, that is obtainable from the classic writers will not be of much practical service to the reader who has not also studied the principles of Greek art. Probably some information given in the section on "The Dances of the Greeks" in the present writer's *Dancing in All Ages* will prove of service from the practical standpoint.

A good many exponents of the art, both professional and amateur, seem to base their conceptions of Greek dancing mainly, if not solely, on the figures which they see painted on ancient vases in the British Museum. These are all very well in their way; but we should bear in mind that the paintings on Greek vases are of varying merit. Some are good, some mediocre, and not a few positively bad. Of course the Greek vases are useful in some degree, but they are by no means always reliable. We occasionally find the dancers represented on them with their lower limbs awkwardly placed and their arms doubled in unsightly angles. But do not for this reason imagine that such was really the custom of Greek dancers. Some well-known exponents of dancing, who certainly ought to know better, appear to have fallen into this very obvious error.

Just consider a little. Because we find the figures in early Tuscan and Florentine paintings represented ranged in straight lines, without any regard to artistic or even natural grouping, we do not assume that the people of that period were really accustomed to range themselves in this peculiar manner. No, we believe that people in those days stood about and grouped themselves naturally, just as they do now, and we attribute the straight line convention to the fact that the artists did not know how to depict them in proper perspective.

If in succeeding generations any so-called "futurist" productions should chance to be unearthed, do you suppose the finders will believe that people in the twentieth century really looked



as they see them there represented? Heaven forbid!

But even the worst and most primitive Greek painting was infinitely superior to these effete productions. For anything at all comparable we must go back to the Stone Age. I only wished to point out that the artists whose occupation it was to decorate vases in ancient Greece—although we know that some were so painstaking as to complete the outline of partly hidden figures, in order to produce the visible part correctly—were not invariably artists of the most conspicuous merit any more than are all of those who follow such occupations at the present day. For this reason, then, it is not advisable to place too much reliance on their powers of depicting the action and attitudes of dancers.

But there is another source of information to which we are able to turn with *absolute certainty*. We know, from Athenæus and other writers, that the models from which the great painters and sculptors of ancient Greece produced their immortal works were chosen from the finest dancers of their time. Therefore, although the pictures of Parrhasius, of Zeuxis, and Apelles are known to us only by repute, or by stories connected therewith, we may, by carefully studying the many beautiful copies and the few originals of Greek sculpture that happily still adorn the world, discover certain facts upon which to base our conclusions with perfect confidence.

Foremost among the sculptors of ancient Greece stand out the names of Myron, Pheidias, Polycleetus, Praxiteles, Scopas, Lysippus and Leochares.

But there are many lovely statues, as, for instance, the Venus of Melos, the Aphrodite dei Medici, the Apollo Belvedere, the Artemis of Versailles, and others whose origin is either extremely doubtful or cannot be attributed to any known sculptor. Their beauty and antiquity, however, are unquestionable, and from them and such works as the Aphrodite of Cnidus after Praxiteles, the "Amazon" after Polycletus, and especially the beautiful "Ganymede" after Leochares, we may learn that the Greek ideal of gracefulness was similar to that which I have already attempted to set forth in considering *The Beautiful in Dancing*.

In the "Ganymede" above mentioned we have, in fact, a perfect *arabesque* that might well serve as a model for any dancer. The boy is represented in the grip of the eagle sent by Zeus to capture, though not, of course, to hurt him. His feet are just off the ground, the left leg crossed behind the right. His left arm is raised high and delicately *rounded*, while his right arm is slightly extended in the *second position*, the whole body being beautifully curved. Leave out the eagle, let the youth rest on his right toe, and you have an ideal dancing attitude. This piece of sculpture is in the Vatican at Rome. So far as the relative position of the limbs is concerned, there is an almost exact counterpart in the "Hermes" that stands or stood in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence. I mean the one with the raised right arm and extended left leg, the whole forming an harmonious combination almost exactly resembling the conventional "attitude" of dancing, as explained in a former chapter.



Of rapidly moving draped figures I doubt if there are finer examples in marble than the wonderful Chiaramonti Niobid—attributed by some to Praxiteles and by others to Scopas—and the lovely “ Iris ” of the Parthenon (eastern pediment), certainly designed, and perhaps even executed, by Pheidias himself.

Again, for grace of line and poetic suggestion of human strength and ingenuity vainly opposed to irresistible immortal power, what could surpass the figure of the youth in the famous Niobid group, who with his raised right arm uses his chlamys as a shield to protect his fallen sister from Diana’s darts? It should perhaps be mentioned that in the original grouping the girl was represented as being supported against her brother’s knee.

Even the few works of sculpture that I have mentioned should in themselves be sufficient to convince any critical observer that the ancient Greek dancers, from whom we are told they were modelled, were not in the habit of placing their limbs in those awkward, constrained positions which certain exponents of so-called “ classic ” dancing have delighted to exhibit before monstrous, rococo and gaudily bedaubed backgrounds on the modern stage—settings such as the ancient Greeks, with their refined instincts and artistic perceptions, would never have tolerated.

Of course in ancient Greece the dancers did not move on the extreme tips of their toes. Neither bare feet nor sandals would have been adapted for such dancing ; moreover, I doubt if it would have appealed to lovers and worshippers of nature.

But the Greek dancers *did certainly turn their limbs outward*. There is abundant evidence of this in Strongylion's "Artemis" (Vatican), in the "Amazon" after Polycletus, in the "Apoxymenos" after Lysippus, and indeed in all famous antique statuary after Myron had emancipated himself from archaic tradition and learnt to invest his works with a semblance of actual life and movement. The curve of the wrist, which by *rounding the arm* disguises the bend at the elbow in the "Ganymede" to which I have alluded, is evidence of the care taken both by the sculptor and his model *to avoid a display of angles at the joints*, this being doubtless an error common to bad dancers in all ages.

Although we frequently find Greek statues in more or less upright attitudes that may well be imitated by the classic dancer, I do not remember to have seen any antique statue represented in the horizontal *arabesque*, or that in which the body is balanced at right angles to the supporting limb. But neither have I seen any modern statue so represented. There is no reason why we should assume that the Greek dancers did not adopt this beautiful posture, but there are obvious difficulties in the way of expressing the same in marble. It would be almost impossible for a single sculptured limb to sustain the weight, and even if artificial support were given it would necessitate an enormous waste of material. For this reason widely extended positions of both arms are rarely employed in sculpture, except in reliefs, of which there is at least one instance among the metopes of the Parthenon.



But, leaving the student to continue the study of classic attitudes and movements on the lines indicated, let us turn to the actual dances of the ancient Greeks. Doubtless the style of dancing which they connected with religious worship bore a distinct character, and differed from the dancing which they practised for mere amusement, as the style of music which we call sacred is different from the style we call secular. In this the distinction does not depend upon the sadness or joyfulness of the melody, because our sacred themes are often lively while much of our secular music is sad. As Shelley so beautifully expresses it, "Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought." The distinction, I think, depends more upon the general construction of the music, the manner of harmonizing and the nature of the cadences. So doubtless it was with the dancing of the ancient Greeks. In their Pantheon were deities who presided over things evil and disreputable, as well as those who personified, as it were, whatsoever was noble and good; so their sacred dances may have been chaste and refined, impassioned, impetuous, or even obscene, according to the attributes of the particular god or goddess in whose honour they were held; but they were different from those dances that were purely domestic.

The nature of ceremonial worship in those times was such that some of the sacred dances would, from our point of view, appear less reputable than the dances that were of a social order. Any student of mythology will understand my meaning when I point out that dances connected with

the Cotytia, or rites of Cotytto, the goddess of debauchery, or dances dedicated to Priapus or Mylitta, were necessarily of a shameless nature and phallic origin; while, on the other hand, dances instituted in honour of Artemis, of Demeter or of Phœbus, the pæans of Lacedæmon, Crete and Delos were eminently noble and dignified.

As I pointed out in a previous chapter, it was the order of dancing called by the Greeks ἐμμέλεια—*emmeleia*—that was generally practised in the temples, and this consisted of slow *terre à terre* steps, solemn, graceful postures, and movements of invocation with outstretched arms. The style of dancing diametrically opposed to this—dancing of a light, comic, and sometimes indelicate nature<sup>1</sup>—was known as κορδαξ—*cordax*—of which the *dithyramb*, or dance of inebriated revellers around the altar of Dionysus, will serve as an example.

That the value of dancing as a social pastime was fully recognized in the Heroic Age we may learn from the various passages in Homer. For instance, there is in the twenty-third book of the *Odyssey* one which shows that in these early days dancing formed an essential feature of the wedding ceremony. When the wanderer has at length been recognized by the faithful Penelope, he tells his son, Telemachus, to “let the bard who has the harp divine lead the festal dance, so that whoever hears it from without may say it is a marriage.” And then we read how “the great house resounded with the feet of men and beautiful girded women making merry.”

<sup>1</sup> “Now the *cordax* among the Greeks is an indecorous dance, but the *emmeleia* is respectable.”—Athenæus.



Again, we read how in the dance "designed by Dædalus for the fair-haired Ariadne," the youths with tunics and "golden swords" suspended from "silver belts," and maidens clad in fine linen with "beautiful garlands," danced together "holding each other's hands." And they danced in a ring, "bounding with skilled feet . . . and at other times they ran back to their places between one another."

The above dance, which I think is the one alluded to in W. E. Gladstone's *Juventus Mundi*, appears similar to a social dance that was practised together by the youths and maidens of Sparta and called ὄρμος—*hormos*—or the necklace. This, we are told by Lucian, was begun by a youth who led off the dance with steps of a martial character, and was followed by a girl who with her companions employed "gentle, graceful movements, such as were becoming to her sex," the whole dance forming "a chain of manly vigour and feminine modesty entwined together."

This, no doubt, was the kind of dance that William Collins pictured to himself when, in his *Ode to the Passions*, he sang :

They would have thought who heard the strain  
They saw, in Tempe's vale, her native maids,  
Amidst the festal sounding shades  
To some unwearied minstrel dancing,  
While, as his flying fingers kiss'd the strings,  
Love framed with mirth a gay fantastic round.

Athenæus speaks of a social dance called ἀνθεμα—*anthema*—in which the performers sang while dancing a verse about "roses," "violets," and "beautiful parsley." But it seems to have been

a dance of a somewhat trivial nature, more like a children's game.

In the comedies of Aristophanes there are frequent allusions to dances performed in a ring. Thus, for instance, "Put yourselves in motion, each one; trip lightly with your feet, advance in a circle, and with hands joined move to the time of the dance."<sup>1</sup> At the conclusion of *Lysistrata* the dancing maidens are encouraged by the chorus to "move their feet quickly" and also to "leap like young fawns."

My object in quoting these passages is to prove directly from the classics that those who associate the idea of classic dancing with slow, body-twisting, arm-wriggling, contortional performances are altogether at fault. I might go so far as to challenge modern exponents to produce any authority that such movements were ever practised by the ancient Greeks. As a matter of fact, the contortional movements to which I allude bear more resemblance to the dances of nations further East, and should not be properly described as "classic."

Among the beautiful fresco pictures that still adorn the ruined buildings of Pompeii are to be seen figures painted more than two thousand years since. Those discovered in what is known as the "House of the Dancers" were removed to the museum at Naples. There is notably one female striking a pair of cymbals over her left shoulder; and another, only partially clad, holding a flowing chlamys, or scarf, lightly between her fingers. The left arm is raised and carefully rounded, the right lowered and a little extended.

<sup>1</sup> *Thesmophoriazusæ*.



In each of these figures the feet are correctly placed according to the rules of dancing, and the head gracefully poised on the shoulders. There are other graceful dancing figures, some with arms entwined together; but these two, of which I made sketches when staying at Naples, would alone be sufficient to refute the notion that Greek dancers were in the habit of assuming those awkward angular attitudes that are sometimes exhibited as "characteristic." The "Dancers" of Pompeii, which, although built in Italy, was a Greek city, are represented as moving strictly according to the recognized canons of the art, such as it has been my earnest endeavour to inculcate throughout these pages.

The space at my disposal in this chapter has only allowed me to adduce a comparatively small amount of evidence from the great mass available to the inquirer; but if I may be allowed to base conclusions on the facts already advanced, together with whatever knowledge I have gained by research and personal observation in British and foreign art galleries, I would briefly sum up as follows:

#### CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF GREEK DANCING.

1. Greek dancers were trained to turn their limbs outward, though the angle formed by their feet in any given position was probably less obtuse than that theoretically adopted in modern operatic schools.

2. Greek dancers carefully disguised the angles naturally formed by the hinge joints of their limbs in precisely the same manner as do all

really good dancers at the present day. The angular positions depicted on some of the ancient vases are, as we have seen, attributable rather to the artists' imperfect execution than to the dancer's awkwardness.

3. Greek dancers did not practise moving on the extreme tips of their toes, but they considered it beautiful to rise on their toes in upward movements, attitudes and arabesques.

4. The Greek ideal of gracefulness in dancing appears to have embraced all that is most truly artistic in the Italian school; but certain conventions of the modern stage were not practised by Greek dancers. For instance, when male and female dancers appeared together in public, each sex had an equal share in the honours of the performance. The practice of making the man a mere foil to the lady—exploiting the *ballerina*, so to speak—was a thing unknown in ancient Greece.

5. The cultivation of extreme lightness, agility, and rapidity of movement was an essential feature of Greek dancing. Abundant evidence of this may be found in the classics, as, for instance, the description of the *διποδία*—*dipodia*—given by Aristophanes. In the *βίβασις*—*bibasis*—a Laconian dance for girls, *caprioles en arriere* were continuously executed.<sup>1</sup> *Entrechats*, or crossings of the limbs, were also introduced in certain dances.

6. In dances of the grave or tragic order the chiton was sometimes worn long, but in movements

<sup>1</sup> Müller, *History of Doric Race*. Mention is made of a Laconian girl who boasted that she had danced it a thousand times oftener than any of her companions.



of a livelier nature it was gathered up under the girdle to allow free action of the limbs. Sometimes, however, the chiton was actually shortened, as shown in Strongylion's "Artemis" in the Vatican. Occasionally, but I think not often, the chlamys was used as an accessory, and kept flowing by the dancer's hands.

The great merit of Greek dancing lay in the fact that it called into more or less vigorous action all parts of the body. When Socrates was caught by his friends practising the dance *memphis*, he said that dancing was a gymnastic exercise for every limb.<sup>1</sup> Even in the *emmeleia*, or dance of tragedy, arms, legs, head and body were simultaneously employed in slow undulating movements or harmonious postures.

Those who intend practising "classic dancing" after the manner of the ancient Greeks must on no account imagine that, by making a speciality of this particular branch of their art, they can afford to ignore any of the established rules of dancing. On the contrary, they must be most careful to observe them.

With the exception of continued tiptoe movement—which, had it been practicable, would probably have been condemned by the Greeks as an unnatural mode of progression—the would-be classic dancer should learn and practice all the most beautiful steps, movements, poses and arabesques belonging to the art, for these were also most assuredly known and practised in ancient Greece.

<sup>1</sup> Xenophon.

One of the main principles in Greek art was unwearied effort to idealize the *natural*. It may be objected that centaurs and satyrs were not natural objects. True, they were not as a whole ; but the component parts of such creatures were closely imitated from Nature *at her best*. The art that united them to form a mythological being was, in a sense, creative. When Zeuxis desired to paint a really beautiful woman, he did not work from one model only. He selected five from the loveliest of the Agrigentine virgins, and by combining whatever appeared most perfect in each produced his "Helen." This was not mere realism ; it was Nature idealized. Realism is but imitative. The highest form of art is surely that which creates.

There is an observation of George Eliot's to the effect that it is for Art "to present images of a lovelier order than the actual, gently winning the affections, and so determining the taste." If exponents of dancing would only cherish this excellent maxim, and, instead of allowing themselves to be influenced by pernicious examples, seek through their art to win the affections by presenting lovelier images, they might determine the public taste in the right direction.

For all aberrations of art—not only of dancing, but of art generally—have their little day, and then perish with their promoters. Impressionists, cubists, futurists, vorticists, and the rest—all must go. The only art that survives is that which is founded on the eternal principles of Nature. Whatever was really beautiful two thousand years since is beautiful to-day, and will be two thousand



years hence. You cannot expel Nature. You may transpose, select, or idealize from her, but in true art she is always present. "*Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.*"

In the fantastic productions of the schools above named, and others that have already passed or are passing into well-merited oblivion, one seeks in vain for Nature. An effort has been made to expel her. Consequently their influence cannot endure. The devils of mediæval times were, like the pagan satyrs, half men, half goats, while angels were lovely women with the wings of birds. Still, these beings were not *wholly unnatural*. But to mix up portions of the human form divine, together with cubes, triangles and other geometrical figures into a heterogeneous mass, is an outrage against Nature, and to present the result as "a work of art" is an insult to mankind. Such designs, even if the draughtsmanship be good, make no appeal to the sympathies. They leave us cold.

Fortunately, perhaps, the tendency of these egregious productions, like the efforts of decadent dancers, is to grow more and more preposterous. At first they attract attention by their extravagance, and afford a certain amount of amusement, but finally they provoke disgust. People weary of such absurdities, and then, with critical and perceptive faculties reawakened, they gladly turn again to genuine art—art which, however idealistic or creative, is based upon a secure natural foundation.

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To a casual glancer through the foregoing pages observations on painting and poetry might, in a work ostensibly about dancing, appear digressive. But the student who has patiently studied the book will have seen how in past ages the arts were inseparably connected, and will know that there should still be interaction between them. The relation of music to dancing is, of course, obvious ; but, provided each is a true artist, the dancer may learn much from the painter, and the painter much from the dancer, while the poet may gain inspiration from and also inspire the efforts of both. It must, however, always be remembered that the prolific source of inspiration for true artists of every kind is Nature herself, for Nature is the mother of art.





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